

# **Social Work Discourses: An Exploratory Study**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Chester  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Karen Dawn Roscoe.**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to critically analyse and explore how social workers (operating in the adult social work practice domain) draw on wider social (and social work) discourses in accounting for the work that they do. Utilising purposeful samples of students and qualified social work practitioners, this exploratory study of discourses analyses the implications this has on the construction of the social work identity, role and practice (action). Driven by a series of research questions, the objectives of this research were:

- 1) To critically analyse and explore the discourses on which students and social work practitioners draw on in their accounts of social work practice;
- 2) To identify and critically analyse the subject positions and discursive practices (collective ways of speaking) of social workers in respect of these discourses;
- 3) To critically analyse how and in what way social workers at different stages of the career trajectory draw differently upon these discourses;
- 4) To critically analyse and evaluate the implications for practice and service users of the respondents' subject positioning and the discursive practices that they employ;
- 5) Develop a critically reflexive method (model) for social work education and research in order to make recommendations for research, education and critical social work practice (in the context of self-awareness).

As this study involves several people in the exploration of adult social work (Community Care policy context), it will contribute to knowledge of the meaning given to contemporary social work. It does so by expanding the concept of discourse analysis to the wider social context in which the overall narrative (story) is 'told'.

This research aims to understand how respondents draw on discourses in particular ways and includes an analysis of the contradictions and gaps within the overall narrative of social work. Stemming from wider pre-determined narratives that are available in social work cultures, this study not only analyses the words themselves by utilising discourse analytic tools, but demonstrates new ways in which to apply critical discourse analysis in the exploration of accounts of social work. In this examination, this research critically analyses and evaluates the implications these discourses can have on identity construction (personal and professional self), as well as on those social work intends to benefit (service users).

## Summary of Thesis

In exploring the language surrounding social work, chapter one sets the scene and presents the most dominant narratives surrounding the construction and identity of social work. These themes (drawn from wider social contexts and research) are returned to in chapters four and five where accounts from data are aligned with historical, political, cultural and social contexts in social work and beyond. Part two of chapter one provides a thematic literature review of research studies undertaken in narrative and discourse analytic studies in social work to date. This review built on my knowledge and informed the methodological choices of this research. The concluding part of this chapter presents a linguistic map of the recurring language that surrounds contemporary (adult) social work.

The methodological choices in this thesis are illustrated in chapter two. This provides the rationale for the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) utilising Fairclough's (1992) Three-Dimensional Model in combination with critical ethnography in this study. This chapter demonstrates the relationship between narratives and discourse as well as highlighting my own position (power) as researcher in this context. This is because the culture in which I was/am located is the culture I study, and therefore critical ethnography was imperative in showing how I adopt a particular positionality<sup>1</sup> in the context of my research.

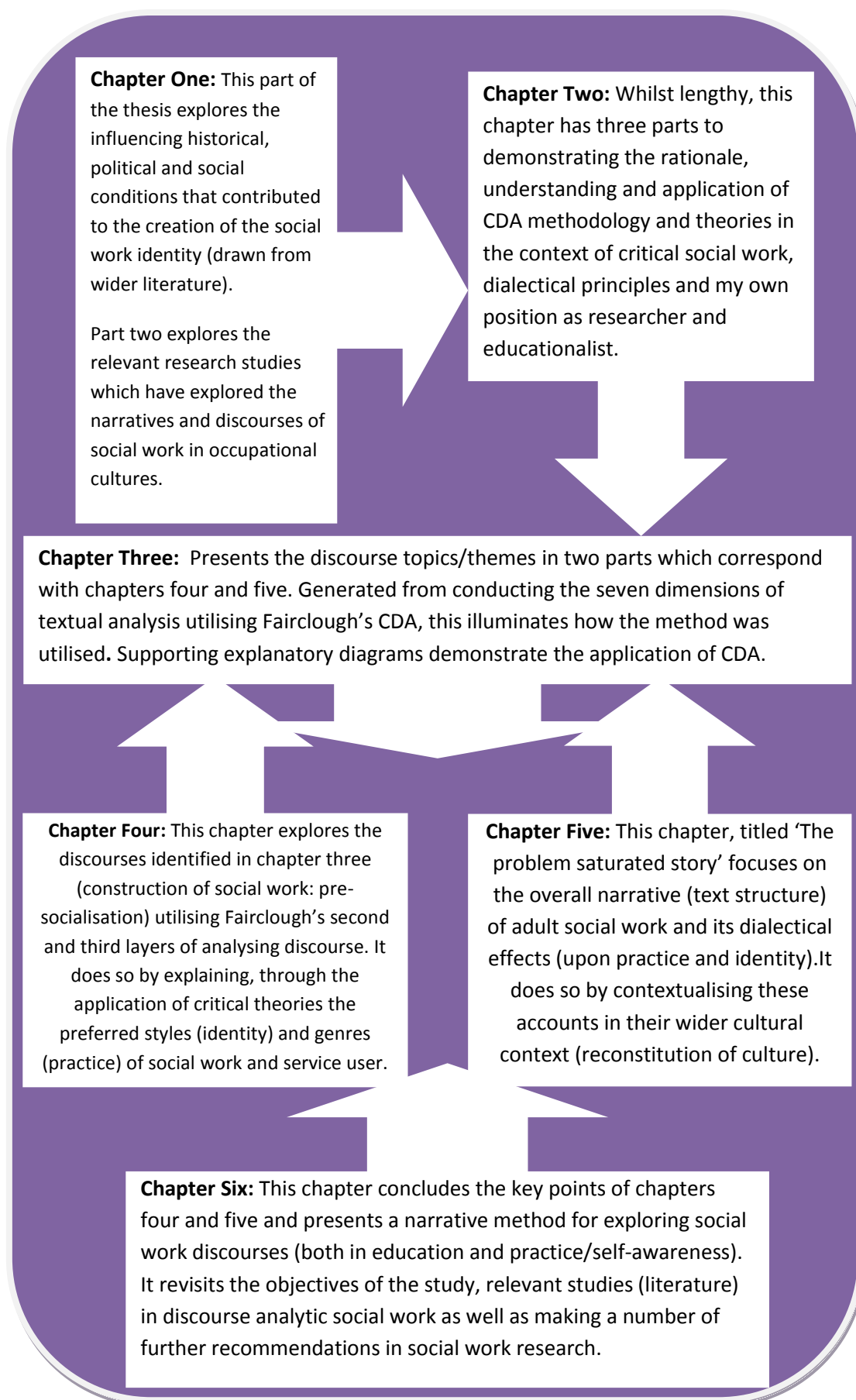
Chapter three presents data and illustrates how the detailed textual analysis in Fairclough's (1992) model was undertaken, drawing on critical linguistic theories within a framework of seven dimensions of analysis. Each discourse theme identified from this analysis is supported with a descriptive commentary, alongside a sample of texts (quotes) that are annotated in a particular way to draw the reader's attention to what aspect of the language is being analysed (for example use of pronoun, verb or word choice). Each discourse theme is considered against wider cultural and social practices which relate to the second and third stage analyses of accounts in CDA. This is understood as extending the micro-analysis (seven dimensions of textual analysis) to the macro level (cultural and social practices). A discussion of the discourse themes identified is presented in subsequent chapters, which apply critical social theories consistent with the research paradigm guiding the study. In essence, this is where the thesis discusses and explains, through critical analysis, the discourses of social work, illuminating the practicalities of CDA in the context of critical social work.

The conclusion summarises the key themes drawn from the exploration of the accounts of social work and reviews how these are consistent with other discourse and narrative studies. The final discussion focuses on a reflexive method for social work education, drawing attention to the study of organisational cultures. In order to foster and encourage individuals who participate in these cultures to adopt critical social theories, this method aims to raise consciousness of the personal and professional self in the context of social work education and practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Positionality is a term used in critical ethnography which forces the researcher to acknowledge their own power in the research process (Thomas, 1993).

## Thesis Map



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## Chapter 1, Part 1: The Narrative of Social Work

### 1.1 Introductory Narrative

The idea for this research study and motivation behind it came from my state social work practice during 1999-2002 (Adult Social Work in North East Wales). When entering local authority social work, I found that I was able to engage in creative and innovative approaches to social work even within the framework of Care Management/Care Co-ordination, yet I found myself surrounded by practitioners who were unable to find alternative ways in which to view contemporary practice. My first supervision session as a newly qualified social worker in Wales exposed me to comments like, 'You can forget about theory and all that anti-discriminatory practice you learned in college, you are in practice now.'

Many other comments like this pointed to a culture and set of practices which made me consider whether social work was the right profession for me. Despite the effect this kind of culture can have upon motivation, I found myself questioning why practitioners engaged in well-established and subsequently reinforced repetitive ways of talking and thinking about social work. In my view, these ways of talking hindered ability to think or practise creatively.

When I later moved into higher education, I encountered social work students adopting these well-established and recognisable ways of talking such as 'social work is a deskilled profession' (particularly following their second year practice placements). What I have termed *post-socialisation* in this thesis (year two students and onwards in undergraduate degrees in social work); these cultural scripts raised more questions for me. Not only did I consider how these ways of talking restricted practice, but I also considered the impact these had on motivation and the construction of social work just at the time students were endeavouring to make sense of it. This curiosity led to the development of this research study.

## 1.2 The Social Work Context

In this section the narratives that surround the development of social work as a profession from its inception in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the rise of managerialism in the 1980s are explored. Here, this research draws on Hough's (1999) understanding of managerialism, under which organisations, political agendas, philosophies and cultures are sets of practices which address organisational goals/objectives. The reason for exploring narratives surrounding the historical development of the profession is that it is important to contextualise practitioners' accounts<sup>2</sup> of social work practice and explore how some of these narratives may be reconstituted and drawn upon by the practitioner.

Riessman (2008) points out that in any story or narrative, events are talked about or documented into a sequence and are selected, organised, connected and evaluated as meaningful in order to support the story that is being portrayed. She adds that the term 'narrative'<sup>3</sup> is used in a variety of ways by different disciplines. Ricoeur (1984) for example, understands that narratives are stories which contain a basic structure and are organised in a culturally coherent way. Whilst Solas (1996) summarises the key components of narratives as coherence, continuity and closure, Riessman (2002) adds how individuals can use narratives to remember, argue, justify or persuade. This also includes individuals drawing on narratives to mislead, as well as groups using narratives to foster a sense of belonging to a particular group (Riessman, 2002). In either case, Riessman (2002) concludes that narratives have a social role, that is, they are connected to the wider social world. Narratives that surround the early inception of social work, for example, constitute past experiences of social work and provide ways for practitioners to make sense of the past. In this sense, narratives are understood as occurring within historical moments and reflect the wider social context, its associated language and power relations (Riessman, 2002). As Germain and Hartman (1980) point out, 'It has been

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<sup>2</sup> Accounts are understood here as broadly meaning how social workers account or talk about the work that they do. For a more detailed discussion, see section 2.1

<sup>3</sup> Riessman (2008) points out that the term narrative is often used synonymously with story.

said that historians interpret the past in the light of prominent concerns in their own present' (p. 23).

In any social context, some stories are preferred over others. Whilst some narratives may conflict and change according to context (Fook, 2002), others may become so ingrained and the normal way of construing a situation, that they lead to sets of assumptions. In this way, issues may become widely accepted within a given culture and come to represent forms of reality (Monk, Winslade, Crocket and Epston, 1997). In an endeavour to explore the narratives surrounding the inception of social work, Harris (2008) makes an important point: there will be different representations and ways of viewing particular historical contexts. In different accounts of social work's inception and development, for example, Taylor (2008) focuses on the early ethics of the occupation and profession, while Harris (2008) privileges the nineteenth-century origins of social work, linking professional evolution with the development of welfare regimes. Harris (2008) argues that seeking out the most dominant way social work is represented will inevitably become an act of simplification. Germain and Hartman (1980) argue that historical content can also lend perspective and depth of understanding of the struggles within contemporary social work practice.

Notwithstanding Harris's (2008) cautionary point, the purpose here is to explore the language contained within the dominant and widely accepted narratives of the development and progression of social work. This is because language is understood here as constituting and informing new sectors of reality (Rose, 1989). Whilst according to Gregory and Holloway (2005) the importance of language has been relatively neglected in social work literature, yet the way in which we talk about practice is actually part of practice (Fairclough, 1992). Any narrative (including written or spoken words) can be understood as developing meaning within its social context. At the same time, Mumby (1993) asserts that language contributes to the construction of that context. Gregory and Holloway (2005) conclude that language and narratives surrounding social work's history and identity serve to create social work at any one point in time. As such, to understand what social work is,

...we have to look at its participants, its organisations and its theories about itself, and we can only understand these things if we also see how they are constructed by the society which surrounds them and of which they are a part (Payne, 1991 p. 8).

In this context, the identity of social work can be understood as fraught with complexities, constantly evolving and changing throughout history. Identity in this context means the social worker's identification of themselves as a social worker generally and as a professional. Identities are parts of narratives and consist of the stories people tell themselves and others about who they are and who they are not (Riessman, 2008). Whilst identity can be understood differently and from a variety of theoretical perspectives, identity can be primarily viewed here as involving a process of being and becoming (Jenkins, 1996). In sociology, personal and social identities are categorised separately, although acknowledging their interrelationship and interdependence with one another. The personal identity has several selves which interrelate with the the social actors performance within wider social groups. In other words, any social context will influence the person's thoughts, feelings and actions on the basis of that social group (Turner, Hogg, Oaks, Reicher and Wetherell, 1987). The self has different social identities which originate from both the self-concept and from interaction where the person perceives themselves to be part of a particular social group (Hogg and Vaughan, 2002). Social identities can be distinguished from the notion of personal identity, as personal identities are understood as knowledge that derives from the individual's unique attributes, values and beliefs.

The identity of social work changes, and is influenced by wider social structures (organisations) and practices. These include social work's historical inception and construction, its educational training, where it is located in organisational structures in relation to the welfare state, and how this influences the culture (interaction) within social work practice. This is referred to by Fairclough (1992) as the intertextual layers of social and historical practices within which narratives are embedded. Iedema and Wodak (1999) argue that organisations are created and re-

created through the acts of communication and practices of organisational members, rather than being independently 'out there' (p.7). It is therefore important to 'explore the ways in which organisation members engage in the construction of institutional realities' (Mumby, 1988, p.3). Ways of talking about social work will be constitutive of the culture in which the social worker operates (Mumby, 1988).

Organisational researchers look at accounts and linguistic exchanges as the most powerful aspect of interaction and representation of culture (Garfinkel, 1985; Hein and Wodak, 1987). Their focus is often upon social (cognitive-practical) conditions that lead to certain actions, and how these actions are perceived as signifying a sanctioned ritual of that organisational culture (Iedema and Wodak, 1999).

Here the workplace is understood as a social context "where accounts are produced and regulated, where problems are solved, where identities are played out and professional knowledge is reconstituted" (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999, p.1). In this context, then, the narratives of social work can be explored in relation to how accounts about identity interact, regulate and re-invent knowledge formations within social work occupational cultures (Roberts and Sarangi, 1995).

Identity in this research is concerned with the interplay of structures (organisations) and cultures, and how these influence the construction, understanding and talk surrounding social work practice. The term structure is an abstract concept that can be drawn upon in a number of different ways. It is generally understood within sociology as fixed aspects of the social landscape consisting of powerful social structures and practices such as education, government and religion. Whilst some argue that social systems or structures do not really exist at all and consider these ideas as mere abstractions which have no reality outside our minds and language, this study initially draws on Giddens (1984) who argues that structures of society consist of specific rules, norms and values that guide and influence social actors to manage situations and contexts through social action and interaction. In essence, a social system is considered a manifestation of a particular social structure which enforces a particular set of rules, morals and values which social actors live by and



ascribe to (Giddens, 1984). What is central to these sociological arguments is whether agency is considered to be constrained by larger social structures such as the church or government (Archer, 2000). The concept of agency relates to the question of autonomous action, or put another way, the person's capacity for acting freely. The problem of agency is the extent to which actors are considered capable of pursuing their own objectives and responding to constraints established within the institutional, structural and historical contexts with which they interact (Giddens, 1984).

This is as important in the context of identity as within social structures and practices. Hadden and Lester (1978) point out for example how identity is produced in talk and the emergence of self is inevitably located in interaction. Potter and Wetherell (1987) support this view, arguing how identity is inextricably dependent on the linguistic social practices used in everyday life to make sense of our own and others' actions. This is particularly important in the understanding of how social workers make sense of their identity in the interaction of their everyday work and talk. As Hadden and Lester (1978) conclude, 'accounts of any thing' (p.333) and of identity in particular, must be conceptualised as a continually evolving process. According to Payne (2006), concerns surrounding the social work identity are not just a modern phenomenon; Barnes and Hugman (2002) note that since the term social work has been in use there have always been tensions confronting the social worker. These are based on the internal practices of the profession about what constitutes practice and what can and cannot be done in practice. As Cnann and Dichter (2007) quite aptly point out, 'more than 100 years after social work evolved from its humble origins, we still lack a clear understanding as to what exactly social work is and what social workers do' (p.278).

Current studies echo the tensions that underpin narratives surrounding the identity of social work. Brewer and Lait (1980) argue how social work experienced a period of crisis from the 1970s onward. These authors understood the crisis as being both internal and external, comprising a crisis in confidence experienced by the sponsors of social work as well as social workers themselves. From the 1980s onward, debates in the literature have captured the uncertainty about what constitutes

social work practice, particularly in the context of changing welfare regimes (see for example the work of Camilleri, 1999; Holosko, 2003; Gregory and Holloway, 2005; Hughman 2007; Webb, 2007; Coleman and Harris, 2008; Taylor 2008).

Research has also looked at how the social work identity is understood by practitioners (see, for example, Hall, Sarangi and Slembrouck, 1999; Jones, 2001). Ramcharan, Grant, Parry-Jones and Robinson's (1999) early study in Wales for example, through interviews to explore the experiences of care managers during the initial implementation of community care, highlighted the tension surrounding the role of the social worker within care management (social work with adults). Care management is a framework for practice that follows a distinct set of phases such as assessment, care planning and review. It also focuses on clear and measurable outcomes when working with service users (Ford and Postle 2000). As such, social workers operating under this model described their current practices as more akin to those of double glazing salesmen than social workers (Ramcharan *et al.*, 1999). Further research studies have captured similar tensions where there is a perceived loss of a former role within social work practice (see for example Jones, 2001; Postle, 2002; Carey, 2008, 2012). Irrespective of this context, identity construction with social work is, according to Hall *et al.* (1999) intimately linked with what is expected in a given situated context. These authors argued that identity can be bestowed upon individuals against a backdrop of particular societal norms. The societal norms surrounding social work, and how these subsequently provided a platform for practice, are now explored in the context of early welfare regimes.

### **1.3 Narratives of the Early Construction of Social Work**

The widely accepted narrative surrounding the inception of social work derives from the rapid expansion of charitable organisations during the second half of the nineteenth century (see for example, Young and Ashton, 1956; Garland, 1985; Holosko, 2003; Lundy, 2004; Payne, 2006; Olson, 2007; Webb, 2007; Harris 2008; Taylor, 2008). Charitable intervention characteristically took the form of volunteers who provided help to individuals and groups populating the lower classes of Victorian society (Harris 2002). The philosophy of charitable work was described by

Parrott (1999) as a belief in the personal advancement of the poor through the notion of self-help.

Philanthropy (which Taylor (2008) defined as the love for humanity) played a large part in Victorian charitable activity. Charitable interventions associated with philanthropy arose as a response to social problems, defined as juvenile prostitution, illegitimacy, desperate and deprived children, crime and poverty (Young and Ashton, 1956). In order to address social problems, individual caseworkers (volunteers) were encouraged to help individuals in need develop better coping strategies and to make the best use of charitable funds (Hughman, 2007). Hughman (2007) refers to this as the early micro-level approaches to social work: that is, social work which preoccupied itself with concern for individual behaviour and functioning. Above all else, this form of social work was primarily concerned with rectifying the moral and social order (Jones, 1983; Lundy, 2004; Payne, 2005; Olson, 2007). The picture presented in the literature is that charity workers were helpers or social missionaries who emerged to deal with social problems caused by the social evils of the day (Briggs, 1973).

Much of the work that volunteers carried out on behalf of charitable organisations was attributed to the early work of Octavia Hill, who in 1882 published a paper titled *The Work of Volunteers in the Organisation of Charity*. This argued that providing for the poor required a robust system of co-ordination and administration (McBriar, 1987). Hill, a housing reformer and member of a charity titled the 'Charity Organisation Society' (COS), argued that the efforts of volunteers were being wasted because the districts in which they worked were too large for them to effectively manage demand for their services (Lewis, 1995). Hill's paper outlined how volunteers, mainly women, needed to work in a way that was systematised, in order to administer relief through a combination of corporate institutions and voluntary organisations (McBriar, 1987). In other words, voluntary charity needed a method, a coherent plan and a scientific approach to understanding social problems (McBriar, 1987). The COS set out to demonstrate this through case study research into social conditions. By the 1970s, the COS had established itself as the leading

authority on matters concerning the poor, and according to McBriar (1987) became the dominant voice on social issues in Britain.

The primary object of the COS had been to bring order into the chaotic profusion of London charities (Mowat, 1961). While, according to McBriar (1987), the COS fell far short of accomplishing its primary aims, Mowat (1961) argued that this was more than compensated for by its success in introducing systematic social casework. Hill's introduction of casework, which focused on improving housing and living conditions, presented a new method for charitable care (Lewis, 1995). As Lewis (1995) pointed out,

...the first step to changing the individual's will and creating a purposeful and active citizen was to make an effort to understand the person's perceptions of his or her condition (p. 128).

Bosanquet, who edited the Charity Organisation Review between 1909 and 1921, argued that individuals could break the cycle of their appetites with the help of workers and correct the bad habits of the poor (Lewis, 1995). While academics of the day (see for example Tawney, 1926) argued that the problem of poverty was not of individual character, but a problem of economic and industrial organisation (Young and Ashton, 1956), these arguments fell on stony ground. Hence, social work focused upon individuals and groups of individuals within particular communities at the micro-level (Garland, 1985).

The practice of giving aid to the poor and destitute provided the basis for a programme of social work aimed at transforming individuals (Garland, 1985). This set out to tackle social problems by means of a number of distinctive techniques in line with political principles and objectives (Lewis, 1995), themselves underpinned by the philosophical and religious ideas of Victorian society (Garland, 1985). This resulted in rescue work targeting those deemed to be the most destitute and helpable, and created a branch of social work referred to by Young and Ashton (1956) as moral welfare.

Moral welfare created charitable workers who focused on a particular area/need, and who then concentrated on ascertaining who would be most eligible for relief of poverty (McBriar, 1987). This entailed persuading those deemed the most degraded to be rescued, and led to a distinction between the helpable and unhelpable poor (McBriar, 1987). Indeed, COS members upheld that targeting those eligible for relief was the most important principle of charitable work. As such, a method was required for establishing and determining those eligible (Harris, 2008).

To reiterate, poverty and unemployment were perceived as the fault of individuals, rather than caused by social inequalities (Young and Ashton, 1956). Indeed, the philosophical and religious ethos of Victorian society constructed individuals as free subjects, imbuing them with choice and control over actions and emphasising autonomy and free will (Banks, 1995). From this position, individuals were perceived as able to mould their external environments to their own interests (McBriar, 1987). This form of individualism of character informed a chain of social thinking which celebrated the will's primacy over circumstances (Young and Ashton, 1956).

Garland (1985) highlights that the individual as free subject was prominent in all philosophical, religious and cultural assumptions of the mid-Victorian period. In terms of everyday social philosophy, the values of work, respectability and above all self-help informed the basis of Victorian common sense (Garland, 1985). Such ideas were embedded into the organisation of the economy, the politics of the welfare state and the practices of its institutions (Garland, 1985). Self-help reinforced the belief in free will, and as such reflected the COS philosophies such as liberating and maximising potential (Lewis, 1995). Terms such as *maximising potential* are echoed in the recent social care policy document *Creating a Unified and Fair System for Assessing and Managing Care* (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002). The Unified Assessment Frameworks here are purported to aid practitioners to determine a service user's need, which in turn determines their eligibility for social care services. Such methods of assessment show clear relationships with early Victorian ideas. During the Victorian era, however, it was argued that maximising independence would be achieved through concentrating on character and personal adjustment of

the poor. In their attempts to help the poor redeem themselves, the COS developed a working model for practice and titled this *casework* (Garland, 1985).

The COS developed classifications of the poor and used these to reconstruct philanthropic activity as an expert, professional, and moral activity (Young and Ashton 1956). Hence, in alignment with changing welfare regimes, Harris (2008) points out how social work developed as one of the new society's professional elites (alongside clergymen, doctors and lawyers). This elite understood poverty as arising from the behaviours of poor people, which then became the primary focus of casework (Harris, 2008). Central to this approach was the concept of less eligibility which was understood to ensure that those who were in receipt of relief should not be made too comfortable: the condition of a pauper in the workhouse should not be as attractive as that of the poorest labourer outside the workhouse (Stedman Jones, 1976). In essence, a person who was able-bodied had to be completely destitute in order to qualify for relief (Young and Ashton, 1956). Treating the poor as less favourable would mean that only the completely destitute would come forward for relief. This provided a rationale for eligibility (Harris, 2008) as the clever pauper was seen as taking advantage of private philanthropy to avoid the workhouse (Stedman Jones, 1976).

The rationale for eligibility resulted in rescue work in the form of moral welfare (Young and Ashton, 1956) mainly because welfare organisations in Western countries developed as the offspring of liberal individualism. This meant that individuals were conceived as the primary agents of their own welfare (Clarke, 2005). Liberal individualism (libertarianism) entailed an important shift in political philosophy, where T. H. Green (1891) consolidated previous religious egalitarian principles such as self-development and merged these with ideas associated with early classical liberalism (Clarke, 2005). Classical liberalism here was associated with the belief that the state role ought to be minimal, meaning nearly everything except the armed forces and law enforcement ought to be left to the dealings of its citizens, and the organisations they freely chose to establish and take part in (Locke, 1689, cited in Webb 2007). Webb (2007) understands that this shift in political philosophy stemmed from 'ethical idealism'. Ethical idealism originates from

Aristotle's classical idea that individuals carry in themselves ability for self-development (Webb, 2007); and for the ethical idealist, there was a search for the recovery of moral orientation, the loss of which accounted for the social problems of the time (Webb, 2007). Several authors note how strands of ethical idealism (in the form of individualism) underpinned welfare regimes and subsequently imbued social work's code of professional ethics with its purpose and values (Clark and Asquith, 1985; Rhodes, 1986; Banks, 1995; Hugman and Smith, 1995; Hugman, 1996, 2008). Consequently, the role of the state here was residual, returning the responsibility to individuals as soon as possible. The basis for intervention, according to Gregory and Halloway (2005), was restricted to moral justification and moral guidance, and this became increasingly tied in to methods of intervention in early casework.

#### **1.4 Narratives of Pathology in Casework**

There have been many interpretations of casework, and indeed a paper by Bowers as far back as 1949 identified 34 different definitions (Payne, 2006). The earliest description of casework by Richmond (1917) strongly emphasised a social diagnosis aspect. For several decades, Richmond (1917) had been attempting to turn the practical skills and techniques of volunteers, commonly known as casework, into a more systematic approach. Richmond developed her ideas through workshops, lectures and articles, and later a book *Social Diagnosis* which was the first text on casework (Payne, 2006). Richmond gave the new field of social work a foundation for practice in its attempts to gain professional status (Payne, 2006). Richmond's (1917) approach to casework and its relationship to social diagnosis were explained: case workers needed to:

... make as exact a definition as possible of the situation and personality of a human being...in relation to the other human beings upon whom he in any way depends or who depend upon him and in relation to the social institutions of his community (p. 357).

Whilst the term social work was absent from Richmond's early description of what the new casework was to involve, the refinement of casework and its relationship

to the term 'social work' began to develop in the literature. For example, Devine's (1922) understanding of working as a social worker was described as:

The narrower object of social work is (1) the care of those who through misfortune or fault are not able under existing conditions to realise a normal life for themselves or who hinder others from realising it - dependent children, aged poor, sick, crippled, blind, mentally defective, criminals, insane, negligent parents, and so on - and (2) the improvement of conditions which are a menace to individual welfare, which tend to increase the number of dependents and interfere with the progress and best interests of others who may be in danger of becoming dependent (cited in Payne, 2006, p. 41).

The language above reflects early classifications and assumptions that underpinned working with the poor, the helpable or unhelpable, and later such descriptions shifted to the deserving and undeserving poor (Payne, 2005). Those deserving were easily identifiable, that is the 'sick' or 'aged'. Alongside this, social workers were also required to exercise moral judgement as to whether individual circumstances were considered to be the fault of the service user. Those who were seen as unhelpable or unwilling to help themselves (lazy or feckless) were viewed as undeserving and subsequently banished to the workhouse (Parrott, 1999). Early casework approaches were based on determining whether the clever pauper was taking advantage of the system of relief of poverty, but casework needed a more scientific approach to understanding human behaviour. Before exploring this, Richmond's social casework can be summarised as focused more on the individual, and these ideas were further refined during the early 1920s (Payne, 2006).

The early social work/casework method was aligned with ideas rooted in psychology (focus on individual). For example, in Richmond's (1922) later definition of casework, the concept of personality signalled the introduction of a new lens through which to view the poor. Here, casework and early social work were understood as working with individuals to help develop their personality and for



those individuals to make the necessary adjustments based on expert knowledge (Richmond, 1922).

The focus on personality, which at that time was understood to be inherently fixed and core to understanding human action, reflected a shift from approaches derived from religious principles of philanthropy towards a more scientific paradigm. Cheyhey's (1926) definition of casework introduced terms like 'scientific knowledge and scientific methods' (p.24), which complemented the development of psychological concepts and the idea that people could exercise their free will (agency) to overcome their problems. The knowledge of casework and social work, as Milner (2001) understands it, was problematic because '....lacking in a knowledge base of its own, social work – in its inception – borrowed freely from other people's professional knowledge; most notably, psychiatry and psychology' (p.3).

Because psychiatry and psychology derived from a medical model where the understanding of human behaviour was rooted in pathology, individuals were perceived as at fault, or to blame for their personal circumstances (Milner 2001). Two central tenets of social work, developed by Richmond from 1917 onwards, were that clients and their associated problems were to be individualised, and that successful social casework required careful diagnosis (Milner, 2001). Social work during this time was understood as acting under a 'forensic gaze' because of the strong emphasis on diagnosis (Harris 1995). As Gregory and Halloway (2005) argued, 'clinical social work developed within the context of a prosperous, relatively secure society in the two decades following the Second World War' (p.41). These authors argued that social work (at that time) was understood by practitioners as a therapeutic (albeit clinical) enterprise (Gregory and Halloway, 2005). Clinical social work, under the forensic gaze of Freudian theorising, provided a more formal knowledge base derived from normal and abnormal developmental theories. This was in contrast to the previous caseworker task of exercising moral judgements that were rooted in religious and philosophical ideas in the endeavour to understanding human behaviour and circumstance (Marcuse, 1972).

With the assumption that every problem was psychological, casework was not to be entered into by the untutored. Indeed, 'it had to be approached scientifically, by the application of rational principles that required a detached approach' (Parrott, 1999, p. 23). Here, the social work recipient was seen as morally weak and in need of guidance and correction (Gregory and Holloway, 2005). Clinical social work during this period was also underpinned by the drive for professional recognition and resulted in what Rose (1985) termed psy-complex approaches to casework. It was developed by a group of theorists seeking to assert a particular view of human behaviour and based on Freudian (later termed psychodynamic) ideas; their language seeped into casework in the form of problem solving approaches, later referred to as psychosocial approaches to social work (Howe, 1987, 1992).

The problem-solving approach towards casework originated from psychosocial approaches which locate practice in the context of the interplay of psychological and societal factors (Watson and West, 2006). Psychosocial ideas and approaches derive from empirical research which investigated successful casework. Empiricism, that is, constructing a real world in which things can be measured and known, meant that social work practice or casework could be measured and tested through supposedly neutral observations. The powerful tradition of empiricism saw the National Institute for Social Work in the 1970s and 1980s adopt such ideas, influencing a model that considered there was a real world in which things and problems could be measured and monitored through clear outcomes and time-limited work (Berg, 2004). Indeed, there had been evidence from evaluative research that a clearer time-limited agreement between client and worker led to more successful outcomes in casework (Reid and Shyne, 1960). The empiricist social worker focused on measuring the success of the outcomes agreed between worker and client (Berg, 2004). As Pease and Fook (1999) noted, empiricism is the tradition of social work and short term casework reflected the developing welfare regimes of the time. According to Milner (2001), as a result psychosocial casework became the dominant activity of social work, and social problems were recast as individual or based in family pathology. The clients' behaviour, seen as determined by a combination of social or psychological factors, was viewed as if the clients had no

awareness of their problems (Gregory and Holloway, 2005). These ideas highlight how theories and methods underpinning social work, both historically and currently, are aspects of social work practice itself (Camilleri, 1999).

The language inherent in Freudian and psychosocial methods of intervention was adopted throughout the early development of social work. The social worker took on the role of 'expertise' where an assumption was made that every problem was psychological. This still manifests itself in social work practice today, particularly in the arena of children and families. Some research studies have depicted how psychodynamic ideas are privileged over other approaches in social work (see for example Hall, Sarangi and Slembrouck, 1997; Riemann, 2005; Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006). These approaches however were investigated during the 1960s and 1970s, and produced negative results about the effectiveness of social work with clients when underpinned by clinical and psychological assumptions (Fischer 1976, in Munro 2004). This research also demonstrated social workers' inability to articulate and ground their work in clear theoretical perspectives and methods (Munro, 2004). As a result, this research further fuelled the commitment to scientific and empirical approaches to social work practice, which embraced and built upon the psychosocial approach (Holosko, 2003). This demonstrates how social work can,

...be considered a socially constructed profession, in the sense that it has been created as a means for working with certain individuals who have been defined as socially problematic. Its focus is one on individual–environment interaction and its orientation is towards these individuals as subjects (Sheppard, 1998 p.52).

### **1.5 Narratives of Managerialism and Care Management**

Debate surrounding empiricism and its appropriateness as a way to evidence casework was first published in American journals (the *Social Service Review* and *Social Casework*) during the 1970s (Camilleri, 1999). The debate was, as previously noted, grounded in the drive for social work to gain professional status (Camilleri, 1999). The Seeborn Report (1968) added weight to this drive; as Walter (2003)

noted, when under pressure to become a proper profession, social work had 'often failed to attend to its ambiguous and improvisational nature' (p.278).

The Seebohm Report (1968) also argued that coordination and flexibility in service provision was inadequate and the quality and range of service provision was poor. These arguments echoed Richmond's early rhetoric and her arguments to develop a lead organisation - the Charity Organisation Society. Webb and Wistow (1987) point out how the Seebohm Report merged social work's professional identity with local government structures. According to Lymbery (1998), the location of social work within local government structures increased the level of accountability of social workers; and from this report onwards, social workers were neither autonomous professionals acting upon their own discretion, nor bureaucratic functionaries (work that is located in administrative roles and tasks only) (Harris, 2008). As such, social work, post-Seebohm, would exist within the shell of local government administration, as a form of bureau-professionalism (Parry and Parry, 1979). Bureau-professionalism is understood as a process which frames the exercise of professional judgement, but within constraints of budgetary management (Mahony and Hextall, 2000). This was underpinned by a particular ideology (Evans 2009).

Thompson (1984) notes how ideology is employed by many authors but as a purely descriptive term, where it is understood as 'systems of beliefs' or thoughts. Set apart from this neutral definition of ideology, there are various ways in which ideology can be understood. In the context of social work and its strong alignment with the welfare state, Althusser's (1971) theory of ideology is useful as it situates ideology within the institutional and structural context, for example, local government structures (Thompson, 1984). This theory argues that ideology has a material existence based on the representations which make up ideology. Such representations then become inscribed into social practices and expressed in objective form (Thompson, 1984). Ideology, drawing on Althusser's (1971) theory represents human beings' lived relations to their conditions of existence, which is understood as inextricably linked to powerful institutions such as governments and religions.

The main ideology adopted in the welfare state is managerialism and this became inscribed into the practices of social work as a new form of professionalism. The welfare state adopted bureau-professional frameworks in public services in the form of assessment processes and eligibility criteria. Such frameworks were aimed at aiding practitioners to follow rules and guidelines set out in law and policy. Bureau-professional frameworks had resonance in all countries as managerialist principles became embedded into the public provision of services (MacDonald, 1990).

Lipsky (1980) explored how bureau-professional frameworks (influenced by the institutional and structural context of public services) impacted upon the discretion exercised by the worker. 'His theory of discretion argued that policy implementation required considerable discretion to be exercised by the social worker, and it was their ability to make rules or interpret policy which constituted the 'bureaucratic' element of public service activities' (Lewis and Glennester, 1996 cited in Roscoe, Carson and Madoc-Jones 2010, p. 49). Lipsky (1980, p.xiii) argued that social workers – termed street-level bureaucrats – in their real world day-to-day activities had to operate in a corrupted world of service:

At best, street-level bureaucrats invent benign modes of mass processing that more or less permit them to deal with the public fairly, appropriately and successfully. At worst, they give into favouritism, stereotyping, and routinizing - all of which serve private or agency purposes (Lipsky, 1980, p.xii).

Lipsky's (1980) exploration of street-level bureaucracy and its application to local authority social work has been used to illustrate the nature of social work in social services (see for example, MacDonald, 1990; Lewis and Glennerster, 1996). The nature of local government social work, often referred to as state social work (Jones, 2001), is shaped by legislative frameworks, and amounts to professional discretion exercised by the social worker on the front line (Harris, 2008). Whilst determining whether a client is eligible for services is entirely based upon the discretion of the social worker (Lipsky, 1980), Preston-Shoot (2001) raises an

important point: the decisions made by social workers based on legislative and policy frameworks (bureau-professionalism) are an integral part of the social worker task. Policy, however, is influenced by local government structures and ideology, and creates 'individual and group professional cultures...the way things are done around here' (Preston-Shoot, 2001, p.9). As Lipsky (1980) noted, management and organisational ideology may be able to establish the rules and procedures that have to be put in place for social workers to undertake, but they will find it difficult to control and monitor the work which is undertaken by the social worker (Lymbery, 1998).

In order to increase managerial control, amidst the evaluation and success of the new professionalism adopted for the social work task, what followed in the later Barclay Report (Barclay, 1982) was a further refinement of the social work role into social 'care'. This supported notions of managerialism in casework through the introduction of performance management frameworks. Payne (2006) contends that the overemphasis on social 'care' in this report contests the very identity of social work. Gregory and Holloway (2005) make an important point: language here is used to control the agenda which extends to the removal of the term social 'work' and replacing it with social 'care'.

The social care objective in the Barclay Report (Barclay, 1982) provided a more refined focus for service provision and the social work role. Social workers were reconceptualised as care managers or case managers. Whilst from the 1970s onward social work was defined by task, both in terms of its demands and agency expectations (Gregory and Holloway, 2005), by the end of the 1980s short term casework underpinned by empiricism fitted neatly with agency expectations. By the 1990s, 'social work in the UK had to respond to watershed legislation and policy change in each of the main branches of its activity – children and families, community care and criminal justice' (Gregory and Holloway, 2005, p.46). Welfare services became saturated with the language of outcomes and the measurement of outcomes, and the habit was subsequently adopted by social work, mainly resulting from the introduction of task-centred practice.

Task-centred practice was and still is a model for practice which built on psychosocial theories of human behaviour, focusing on problem solving, short term, and time-limited work with service users (Stepney and Ford, 2000). The task-centred method, developed and refined through empirical studies, stemmed from the past forty years of research supporting these approaches. Unlike several other practice models in social work, task-centred practice was developed within and for social work, and is viewed as one of the major contributions made by the academic discipline (Ford and Postle, 2000). With its emphasis on measurable goals and outcomes (Reid and Shyne, 1969), task-centred practice complemented the prevailing narratives and ideology of less eligibility, reinforcing notions of reduced dependency on the welfare state (Parrott, 1999). For this reason, task-centred practice became popular in Britain's social services departments (Ford and Postle, 2000).

To summarise so far, organisational and social policies surrounding social care favoured the task-centred approach to social work. In drawing on Lipsky's (1980) theory of street-level bureaucracy, Evans and Harris (2004) noted how these changes to social work undermined the discretion exercised by social workers. The power of organisational and social policy, according to a variety of authors, produced more compliant social workers (see for example, Lawson and Rhode, 1993; Clarke and Newman, 1997).

Not only did task-centred practice complement the delivery of community care through the implementation of care management, it also reflected managerial and political agendas driven by principles in health and social care (Gregory and Holloway, 2005). The implication of this language, according to Gregory and Holloway (2005), was that care became a commodity to be managed like any other, and the recipients of care merged into consumers of the product. As a result, the social work literature claimed a new expertise and specialist knowledge in the form of care management (Gregory and Holloway, 2005). However, Cohen (1999) argued that the ethos of managerialism and bureaucracy has 'served to downgrade the status of holistic models and ethical caring in social work practice' (p.101).

A number of research studies capture disgruntlement of social workers at being care managers (see for example, Jones, 2001; Postle, 2002; Carey 2008a, 2012). Whilst these themes are debated in detail later in this chapter, it is important to note here that these studies capture how social workers equate care management as erosion of the traditional social work role, outlining how social workers may understand social work as traditional in the pre-Barclay Report context. This influences how some practitioners draw on binary/dichotomous ways of making sense of social work identity within certain historical periods. These ways of thinking and speaking are reflected in the narratives and language contained within the wider social work literature, and it is to this that we now turn.

## **1.6 Dichotomous Ways of Viewing Social Work**

The social work literature discusses the relationship between theory and practice in dichotomous ways (see for example Sheldon, 1978; Parton and O'Byrne, 2000). Dichotomous ways of viewing subjects simply mean that the subject of discussion is divided into two parts; in this case, theory and practice being viewed as separate specialist entities. For example, Camilleri (1999) points out how writers such as Sheldon (1978) talk about the development of two distinct subcultures in social work: the theoretical subculture and the practice subculture. The theoretical subculture is understood by Camilleri (1999) as being individuals located in universities, whilst the practice subculture exists amongst the practitioners. Sheldon (1978) argued that there were problems in social work in terms of the relationship between theory and practice, as this was perceived as muddled and inconsistent.

The theory-practice divide is a long standing argument which is captured by a number of authors such as Payne (1991) and Germain (1985). Prior to these debates were methodological wars which stemmed from social work's need to demonstrate scientific status (Camilleri, 1999). In this context, methodological wars refers to the academic-researcher's concerns about the rationale and philosophical assumptions that underlie a particular way of viewing social work practice or research – for example, empiricism. Debates as to whether social work was a scientific endeavour or a humanist one emerged as a result of empiricism being privileged as the



favoured knowledge for social work practice. Subsequently this sparked opposition in the literature (see for example, Weick, 1987; Goldstein, 1990).

The push for an alternative research perspective prompted social work being referred to in the literature as art or science. Against empiricism, forms of naturalistic inquiry were advocated (Camilleri, 1999). Naturalistic forms of inquiry aim to explore human complexity in unquantifiable terms or measurable outcomes (Howe, 1987). This allows researchers to share in the understandings of perceptions of others, and to explore how people give meaning to their everyday lives (Berg, 2004). An important point is made by Cnaan and Dichter (2008): each profession will have practical or craft knowledge learned on the job through the experience of applying scientific or empirical knowledge. 'It is the craft – and the mechanisms by which knowledge is applied – that often distinguishes overlapping but distinct fields' (Cnaan and Dichter, 2008 p.280).

According to Cnaan and Dichter (2008) the art of social work is difficult, if not impossible to measure and quantify. They further argue that the nature of social work is very much a science and an art. Davies (1985) contends that dichotomous ways of viewing social work can be viewed in terms of competing worlds or as representing two distinctive cultures.

Parton's (2000) work echoes the dichotomous nature of the narratives surrounding social work practice and its identity. In exploring the central issues about the nature of the social work discipline, he built upon the earlier idea of science or art by reconceptualising these opposing opinions as the 'rational technical' approach or the 'practical moral' approach to social work.

Parton (2000) contends that the emphasis on empirical and evidence-based approaches to practice have influenced social works thinking and theories treating practice as a rational technical activity. Testable techniques derived from scientific research complemented bureau-professional frameworks adopted in welfare regimes. Schön (1983, 1987) points out how the rational technical activity of social work has been embedded in the institutional context for many years, but that such a model fails to capture how professionals operate and how they know in practice.

Parton and O'Byrne (2000) contend that problems or needs in service users' lives are often not presented in a way where rational technical activities easily fit. Knowing in such complex situations is, according to Schön (1983, 1987, 1993), tacit and implicit in the practitioner's actions and decisions. As Fook (2012) notes, creativity and imagination are crucial characteristics of social work in order to respond to human complexity. As such the practical moral activity is understood by Parton and O'Byrne (2000) as social work characterised as art rather than science. This is because, as Goldstein (1990) understands it, art enables the social worker to sit with contradictions and ambiguity posing problems for the rational technical activities in social work.

There are other ways in which social work has been dichotomised. The work of Davies (1985), for example, refers to social work activities in the context of masculinity and femininity, whereas other authors refer to the micro and macro context of social work (see for example Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Garbarino, 1990). Howe (1987) discusses the world of subjects and objects in social work theory, referring to these as two opposing orientations in the way in which we view service users' problems. The objective point of view refers to real and concrete context where the social world exists independently of an individual's appreciation of it, whereas the subjective view is more interested in the mind, perceptions and constructions of the service user (Howe, 1987).

As Fook (2002) points out, however, binary opposites create forced categories of choice, in which case one is often privileged over the other. The way in which this influences practice, for example, is how social workers make sense of their identity. Earlier this literature review noted research that identified and captured how practitioners understood that the traditional role of social work had been eroded. As a result, these prevailing meta-narratives (or pre-disposed narratives) provide practitioners with a ready-made language to interpret social work in binary or dichotomous ways. In summary, the words, sentences, accounts and narratives of social workers can be said to represent the world in some way (Edwards, 1997). That is to say, they can be used to categorise and refer to specific subjects both in the world outside – organisational ideology for example – as well as the inner world

of the thoughts and cognitive processes of the social worker. 'Contemporary philosophers look at how we have ordered the world in language and how our language has ordered our world. Therefore...we need to study language in order to study anything at all' (de Shazer, 1993 p.84). As Edwards (1997) notes, such linguistic representations tap into the mental representations of the world around us.

## Chapter 1, Part 2: Talk as a Practice

### 1.7 Introduction

Talk constitutes the main part of organisational culture, particularly in professional work within the service sector (Czarniawska-Joerges and Jørges 1990; Svensson 1990). A number of sociologists have explored the notion of talk within occupations, focusing on how it functions constitutively to create organisational realities (Garfinkel, 1984; Mumby, 1987; Mishler, 1991; Mumby and Stohl, 1991; Alvesson and Willmott 1996; Iedema and Wodak, 1999; Weiss and Wodak, 2003). When exploring organisations as a cultural phenomenon, language is central to any understanding of organisational reality. Yates (2006) argues that language use,

...is central to and constitutive of the ways in which human beings conduct their interactions. The idea of 'social interaction' is essentially the 'common sense' understanding of discourse (p. 82).

The term discourse is used within a variety of disciplines, often without being clearly defined. There are a number of different definitions, depending on the theoretical orientation of the researcher; this is discussed in detail in the methodology chapter. However, for the purposes of the literature review, discourse is understood as '...that linguistic output, which is produced by human beings when they meet, chat, work and communicate in everyday life' (Yates, 2006, p. 82).

The ways in which people talk about their professional identity in the context of organisational work is of particular interest to the study of discourse. This is because discourse influences and produces the objects of our knowledge and the action (or practice) that is informed by that knowledge. For Parker (1992), discourses are sets of statements that bring social objects into being, and language both constitutes and is constituted by social practices (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997a). From this perspective, discourse in an organisational context is continuously created and re-created in patterns of communication. Moreover, rather than discourses being independently out there, discourse is viewed as a set of structured social practices which create meaning formations (Mumby and Stohl, 1991). In

contrast to this, Mayr (2008) argues that language mediates ideology, particularly in institutions and its interrelationship with social and historical practices of social work. As such, discourse in an organisational context can be understood as systems of knowledge that are drawn on by social workers from their broader ideological context (Fairclough, 2003).

According to Scourfield and Pithouse (2006), social workers' understanding of the work that they do within organisational culture is informed by their location in personal, occupational and wider cultural contexts. Pithouse (1985) argues that such understandings will be identifiable in the 'accounts' that social workers give about the work that they do, and these accounts (histories, stories and diagnoses) will create and sustain a shared occupational culture. It is through these accounts that members will demonstrate their application of formal knowledge as well as occupational assumptions (Pithouse, 1985).

### **1.8 Social Work Accounts**

Accounts are defined as 'linguistic devices that are employed whenever an action is subject to an evaluative enquiry' (Lyman and Scott, 1970, p.112). Bull and Shaw (1992) suggest that casual accounts explored in the context of occupational discourse are relatively neglected. In using the example of social work, Bull and Shaw's (1992) paper *Constructing Casual Accounts in Social Work* adds to the literature on rhetoric and theorising in human services. In their study and exploration of early research surrounding case talk, Bull and Shaw (1992) analysed the use of professional language, lay theorising and narratives in the construction of professional identity. As Roscoe *et al.*, (2010, p. 48) point out 'whereas professional theorising reflects the formal theories and methods of social work which social workers draw on in their everyday work, lay theorising consists of common sense assumptions'. Drawing on Lyman and Scott's (1970) distinction between accounts and explanations, Bull and Shaw (1992) suggest that an explanation does not include any reference to untoward action which has implications for relationships. In contrast, accounts do involve reference to action which might be subject to forms of evaluative enquiry.

Accounting here is understood in terms of how practitioners stand back and make sense of everyday activity, which involves explaining and justifying to others what has been happening in their case (Hall *et al.*, 1999). Accounts are very important in social work practice because social work is supervised and evaluated through social workers' descriptions of the way in which they manage their cases. Pithouse and Atkinson (1988) argue that case talk is a common feature of formal organisations and a key aspect of social workers' everyday work. Accounts of case talk in social work become a matter of competence and capability (Hall *et al.*, 1997), that is, how social workers produce themselves as 'account'able practitioners. In analysing casework and how it is managed by social workers, it is through the medium of accounts that case talk can be understood as either good or bad. This will depend upon how well social workers account for the work that they do.

Pithouse's (1985) early research focused on colleague visibility in the context of a group of social workers employed in a local authority social services department in Wales. By using structured and taped interviews with each child care team member and team leader, amounting to 70 interviews, Pithouse (1985) found that managers had little detailed knowledge of the cases that the social workers were responsible for. Whilst Lymbery (1998) points out 'management and organisational ideology establish the rules and procedures for social workers, they will find it difficult to control the work undertaken by the social worker' (cited in Roscoe *et al.*, 2010, p. 49). The managers in Pithouse's study (1985) argued that an assessment of a social worker's case management could not be derived from performance indicators alone. As such, 'good work' could not be grasped solely from written documentation and casework was evaluated mainly through social workers' accounts. Therefore, case talk constituted the way in which unobserved work was rendered visible. 'Good work' was typically observed as 'good' based on the practitioner's ability to provide a 'good' account. A good account was understood as a narrative that was couched or pitched in an appropriate way, alongside appropriate rhetoric or familiar language (Pithouse, 1985). Here, the practitioner may draw on the language of empiricism, talking in terms of objectives and outcomes for example.

Accounts involve overt descriptions and evaluative stances which are presented to superiors in the form of case talk. In other words, practitioners give accounts of what they are doing because they are underpinned by motives and causes (Heritage, 1988). The accounts provided by social workers are inevitably driven by motives and rules of behaviour because they are an important resource for social workers when accounting for the work they do (Bull and Shaw, 1992). They act as justification for the institutional and professional activity that is taking place (Hall *et al.*, 1997).

### **1.9 Narrative Structure of Accounts**

Within social work case talk, accounts are crafted into narratives which involve and represent more than just the personal reflection and involvement of a practitioner with a service user (Hall *et al.*, 1999). Narratives here are understood as stories which include any recounting of specific events from the past or present, real or imagined (Young, 1987). Stories in casework include accounts of events which took on a narrative plot (theme) and which added coherence to the story line. Pithouse and Atkinson's (1988) research titled *Telling the Case: Occupational Narrative in a Social Work Office* focused solely upon case talk, and explored and analysed how social workers in a local authority discussed their cases (individual clients) with supervisors. This case study found that there was a narrative structure to their accounts of casework, highlighting how practitioners' narratives began by emphasising and constructing a history of their interaction with the service user. This led to and encouraged the audience and/or supervisor to make preliminary guesses or a hypothesis about the nature of the service user's problem; in other words, a diagnosis. Riemann's (2005) later research, similar to Pithouse and Atkinson's (1988) study, demonstrated how case talk in social work was constructed in specific ways.

Riemann's (2005) study focused on social workers and how they tried to make sense of their cases when they shared work experiences during regular case discussions. This study was based on the practice of social workers in family counselling services in one urban counselling centre. The primary focus of the study,

which included 15 audio recorded and transcribed case discussions, was to examine both the properties and sequential order of social workers' case discourses and the deployment of different schemas of communication. In a context similar to Pithouse and Atkinson's (1988) earlier work, Riemann (2005) argued that guessing the nature of the service user's problem involved a process of arriving at a mutually satisfactory diagnosis amongst colleagues who offered categorisation or problem solving approaches. This encouraged a speedy and competitive process to determine which diagnosis was the correct one, and highlighted the tendency of social workers to ascribe fixed attributes (such as hysterical) to clients. Indeed, such classifications and the emphasis on diagnosis stem from scientific methods that were introduced into early casework during the 1920s. The assumption that every problem is psychological appears to have dominated the cultural discourse of the practitioners in Riemann's (2005) study. Riemann (2005) noted that introducing shared 'typifications' of clients and problems, and by referring to these in matter of fact ways, made it clear that such discourses emerged from local professional cultures and proved useful for the practical purposes in hand. Fixed ways of viewing service users' problems affect which versions of reality are considered true in case talk (Taylor and White, 2000). This illustrates how professionals can make a choice in their use of vocabulary when discussing particular cases (Taylor and White, 2000). Therefore, any account will encompass contradictions, because there are other possible ways in which to view the account being given (Bull and Shaw, 1992). The construction of service users within social worker narratives may go unchallenged by team members, particularly where it is not part of the explicit purpose of meetings (Buckholdt and Gubrium, 1979). Consequently, in team meetings case talk can provide a platform for discussion, and the diagnosis of cases is often debated; whereas in supervision or other team meetings assumptions underpinning the construction of the service user's problems may go unchallenged as the practitioner will craft the account in specific ways.

It important to note that the stories/narratives that social workers construct surrounding their casework management are multi-stranded storied narratives of their experiences. As such, case talk is not the sole component of spoken narrative



in social work. Other accounting practices take place, for example sharing experiences with novices (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988). Pithouse and Atkinson's (1988) research demonstrates how case talk relies heavily on the force and organisation of the social worker's narrative. Although case talk accounting is one aspect of social workers' narratives, Hall *et al.* (1997) argue that the social work story involves highly complex structures that include narrative scenarios, multiple voices, and a variety of narrator-actors. These complex structures, influenced by organisational ideologies such as managerialism, in turn influence the language that practitioners draw on in their adoption and implementation of bureau-professional frameworks (Parry and Parry, 1979). For example, in *Moral Construction in Social Work Discourse*, Hall *et al.* (1997) draw on case studies to illustrate how social workers appropriated a range of 'institutional voices' (such as legal and medical) to support their narrative plots. This demonstrated how practitioners operated within the shell of local government administration and how wider discourses influenced the accounts given (Parry and Parry, 1979).

The wider context of social workers' narratives of casework was also evidenced in Taylor and White's (2000) study, which analysed social workers' deployment of institutional voices. The researchers explored multi-disciplinary case talk taken from social work allocation meetings, and claimed that in arguing the case professionals strategically selected and made use of potent words and phrases in order to assemble the facts to make the narrative coherent and rhetorically satisfying. The types of rhetorical skill deployed are interlinked with wider social policy initiatives in social care, and Hall *et al.* (1997) noted that such deployment of potent words and phrases both constructs professional discourse, and establishes and re-establishes professional identity and boundaries.

As noted by Pithouse and Atkinson (1988), practitioners' crafted accounts might be understood as a means to specific ends. That is, narratives were often shown to encompass a plot or theme which problematised particular aspects of cases. Bull and Shaw referred to these types of narrative structure as professional survival kits, which they described as including mistakes, crises, or a worsening of a client's problem or situation (Bull and Shaw, 1992). What this means is that when things go

wrong or where justification of the course of action taken with the service user is needed, professional survival kits can be employed by case workers to justify their actions. For example, Hall *et al.*'s (1999) earlier point about appropriating legal voices to support the narrative plot, alongside Taylor and White's (2000) illustration of how practitioners deploy specific rhetoric to make the narrative plot more satisfying and coherent, highlights how practitioners have developed ways to justify their work in accounting practices (i.e. professional survival kits). Atkinson, Maxwell and Drew (1979) argue that this type of accounting involves a form of defensive discourse similar to professional survival kits, noting that it is partly a function of social work's troubled record in regard to potential charges and failings in child abuse. This inevitably impacts upon how social workers build cases and construct narratives surrounding their interventions with service users. Hence, accounting becomes a means to an end driven by professional discretion, accountability and occupational roles. Riemann (2005) argues that whilst social workers' accounts were deemed rhetorically satisfying, they typically contained a range of rhetorical devices. These included spontaneous narratives, short argumentary commentaries, and sequences of argumentation and abstract description, and were mobilised by workers to support the account/story.

Professional survival kits or defensive discourses were deployed in casework accounts to further problematise service users' difficulties or to justify courses of action and decision making. Whereas Riemann's (2005) study noted similar themes, this particular study, Taylor and White (2000) also showed how the opposite technique was deployed by the practitioners. This took the form of downplaying cases, and social workers' accounts here were performed in a casual and seemingly unproblematic way which served to discourage any disagreement over diagnosis.

The studies discussed illustrate a range of narrative structures that are employed by social workers in their accounts of the work that they do. The practice, or art, of accounting is understood here as both a process by which social workers engage in organisation activity and a product of that activity (Mumby, 1988). This form of accounting is constituted and reproduced through the structures of organisational communication, interaction and symbolism, and informs the norms, values and

rituals of the workplace (Iedema and Wodak, 1999). According to Mumby (1988) meetings are considered to be a prime venue where organisations' dominant ideologies, norms and values are reinforced, negotiated or contested. These values and norms are informed by wider cultural and social discourses, which Fairclough (2003) calls discursive practices (the norms and conventions of a given society and how these operate within cultures), and can be evidenced in a number of research studies. These are particularly evident in processes of lay theorising, as highlighted in a number of research studies (see for example Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988; Hall *et al.*, 1997, 1999; Taylor and White, 2000; Riemann, 2005).

### **1.10 Lay Theorising in Accounts**

Occupational expertise is a key component of social work and social workers are routinely asked, as part of supervision, to recount and evidence their decision making in the management of their cases. These cases, often interpreted through case notes, records or spoken presentations, are then ordered into a coherent narrative. In the Pithouse and Atkinson (1988) study, it was argued that narratives conveyed (implicitly) the workers' evaluation of service users. In both Pithouse and Atkinson's (1988) and Riemann's (2005) studies, the narratives provided by social workers were found to contain an implicit diagnosis of problems as well as justification for decision making. Hence social workers' narratives encapsulated forms of lay theorising, rather than drawing on or demonstrating explicit theorising.

Geertz (1973) understands common sense as representing a cultural system made up of beliefs and judgements. These are implicit rather than explicit, and involve tacit, non-specified assumptions about practice that are culturally and contextually specific (Furnham, 1988). Bull and Shaw (1992) argue that social workers, in providing evidence to their superiors, draw on lay theories to confirm or shore up their diagnoses of particular cases.

Pithouse and Atkinson (1988) and Riemann (2005) argue that while this everyday theory or expertise was neither consistent nor complete, it was drawn on widely by practitioners for practical purposes in hand. This happened, they argued, through formal meetings or sharing with colleagues, indeed whenever case talk was used to

present diagnosis. Everyday social work theory in this context was viewed as an amalgamation of concepts, practice wisdoms and cultures (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988). Within this diagnostic narrative, social workers did not refer explicitly to any set of criteria or categories grounded in technical and scientific vocabulary relating to professional knowledge and evidence-based practice. Rather, the narratives represented a series of common sense, taken for granted or shared understandings influenced by the surrounding occupational culture (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988). Again, such research resonates with that undertaken in the 1970s which outlined social workers' inability to ground their work in clear theoretical perspectives. Whilst the powerful tradition of empiricism was adopted in the 1970s, Preston-Shoot's (2001) important point about individual and professional cultures – 'the way things are done around here' – still heavily influences practitioners' casework accounts. Taylor and White's (2000) work also argues that many accounts of cases contained moral judgements drawn from a perceived notion of expertise. Their study demonstrated, through extracts of reported speech, how narratives surrounding case talk resulted in cases being seen and talked about in particular ways which reflected a perceived expertise and/or wider societal discourses (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988; Hall *et al.*, 1997; Taylor and White, 2000). This type of expertise resonates with the creation of the early moral welfare approach noted by Young and Ashton (1956), which included judgements as to whether someone was deserving or undeserving.

In Riemann's (2005) later study, such rhetorical skills and moral constructions were understood as practitioners getting trapped. Here it was argued that social workers' accounting embraced little explicit theorising about families and their problems, relying instead upon ready-made typifications of families. Riemann (2005) describes the way in which social workers used schemes of communication or rhetorical strategies to inhibit any deeper understanding of cases or accountability for the work that they did, hence case accounting was found to lack any empirical foundation for the conclusions and evaluations that were reached. This was most apparent where social workers had worked with particular clients over a long period, which further hindered the social workers from developing analytical

distance in their evaluation and diagnosis of service users. This rendered it difficult for the workers to step out of thinking as usual, resulting in them giving in to collective values that were grounded in wider organisational, cultural and societal assumptions. The implications for practice are that social workers are able to assemble stories, by adopting specific rhetorical devices to assign pathology within the family saga (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988; Riemann, 2005). This again reflects historical discourses of pathology in casework, termed by Harris (1995) as clinical social work, and echoes Lipsky's (1980) earlier point that practitioners give into stereotyping and routinisation, serving agency purposes rather than the rights of service users.

The notion of evidence-informed practice (empiricism) in social work implies that professional knowledge should be privileged over lay theorising (Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006). The evidence-based school sees knowledge as a substantive product obtained from scientific research (empiricism) (see for example, Rosen, 2003; Reid, Kenaley and Colvin, 2004). The notion of evidence-based practice was the focus of Scourfield and Pithouse's (2006) later research, in which one of the authors spent three months studying the day-to-day office culture of a statutory child care team. The fieldwork strategy comprised observations of routine practice, in-depth interviewing of social workers and examination of selected case files. This study, which was concerned with the interaction of lay and professional knowledge, showed how knowledge sources (evidenced-informed materials) may play a diminished role in guiding practice and knowledge within the arena of organisational culture.

In-depth studies of professionals at work, including research on occupational socialisation, have outlined how knowledge in practice is constructed through rituals of the workplace (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Scourfield and Pithouse (2006) argue that such research highlights how professional work is more reliant on routine and rhetoric than scientific rigour. Giddens (1993) referred to this phenomenon as the 'double hermeneutic' of knowledge. The double hermeneutic of professional knowledge here is understood in the context of how formal

knowledge interacts with informal knowledge to capture the way in which knowledge spirals in and out of expert systems (Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006).

Scourfield and Pithouse's (2006) study of child care practice drew on wider academic debates about the nature of knowledge in social work. This study, which explored lay and professional knowledge, highlighted how practitioners' reasoning drew primarily on lay understanding, and how lay and professional knowledge did not simply come together as an undifferentiated resource. In illustrating this point they revealed, through observations and interviews, tensions between what one social worker termed personal and professional values. The particular case cited related to child neglect and involved reference to the material state of the service user's home. The authors argue that the running together of lay and professional reasoning was particularly apparent in the frequent references to home conditions in the case notes. The term *home conditions*, they suggested, invited lay judgements about the respectable/unrespectable poor which have been historically constructed and evidenced in wider literature on the development of social work (Parrott, 1999; Ferguson, 2003). Hence, this particular knowledge encompassed wider societal discourses not necessarily stemming from formal or contemporary canons of theory or research evidence, but which link to knowledge formations and discourses that pre-exist the practitioner.

### **1.11 Moral Implications**

According to Hall *et al.* (1999) social workers' deployment of lay theorising consists of cultural assumptions and processes of categorisation. These accounts produce and provide detailed descriptions and formulations of service users which serve to reinforce professional categories and identities. These categories provide the platform for debate and argument in case diagnosis. Whilst client categorisation is an important source of professional knowledge, and is central to professional intervention, it encompasses moral dimensions and judgements. Organisational researchers point out that categorisation processes are central to institutional activity (Watson, 1996; Hall *et al.*, 1997).

In social work, there is no place where this is more apparent than where bureau-professional frameworks guide and underpin practice, such as eligibility criteria. Eligibility criteria, which act as user gateways to services, involve professional discretion and categorisation processes. The process of categorisation in this context is problematic because it reflects how practitioners craft their accounts (drawing on occupational assumptions and cultural practices) to support the narrative plot (Hall *et al.*, 1997). The narratives that practitioners construct and their deployment of category selection are identity defining for service users, e.g. problem families.

The moral stance taken by social workers when positioning a diagnosis in the narrative plot has been highlighted by Hall *et al.* (1997) in their exploration of the moral construction in social work discourse. The main focus of this work was an analysis of a social worker's narrative structure in respect of a failure-to-thrive child. Here the authors illustrated how facts and morals were intertwined in the social worker's account. For example, when analysing moral judgements in the social worker's narrative, the authors highlighted how moral judgements were implied rather than overtly stated. The implicit way in which the problem was gradually uncovered, exposing the ways in which wider societal notions of normal/deviant, for example, interlocked with the production of the situated narrative (Hall *et al.*, 1997). Riemann (2005) argued that in the listeners' hearing of the case talk, they can learn something about their colleague's attitude towards a client and their feelings about the casework being managed.

What becomes apparent is that the way in which social workers account for the work that they do, and in the context of storytelling, is complex and involves many influences/forces. Moreover, moral classifications such as the non-cooperative client become part of professional talk, and involve the voices of wider occupational members (Hall *et al.*, 1997). These ways of talking become embedded into organisational practices, and in analysis of professional activity and talk as a moral enterprise, some authors note how narratives are a construction of facts that are underpinned and influenced by wider societal discourses (Hyman 1994).

To summarise, research suggests that social workers adopt evaluative stances in case talk, employing a series of cognitive and rhetorical processes of categorisation. These categorisation processes occur when the sense-making process has, or is, taking place. Research also suggests that team meetings provide a stage for social workers to tell stories about service users and their interactions with them, and these stories construct particular images of service users. The accounts given during case interactions are argued to be characterised by movement towards agreement on particular versions of cases which fit with dominant ideas (cultural or societal) (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988; Hall *et al.*, 1997; Taylor and White, 2000; Riemann, 2005; Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006). Taylor and White (2000) have referred to this form of accounting as the reproduction and representation of pre-disposed discourses.

Wider societal discourses, or pre-disposed discourses according to Taylor and White (2000), are evident in all forms of narrative or account as these are influenced by broader cultural and macro-structures (e.g. managerialism). Macro-structures are understood as comprising major societal institutions, including government, religion and education which together comprise the infrastructure of society (O'Donnell, 1993). The pre-disposed discourses or meta-narratives of managerialism and empiricism are examples of how pre-disposed discourses are echoed in the practitioners' accounts of social work.

Whilst team meetings may be accepted as a rational and professional aspect of social work allocation or case discussion, the role of stories and the moral assessment of service users is argued to have a greater influence on practice than is commonly recognised (Griffiths and Hughes, 1994). The moral tone and assumptions underpinning these stories have arguably more to do with social workers' evaluations of service users' worthiness than a purely evidence-based account (Clark and Mishler, 1992; Griffiths and Hughes, 1994; Johnson and Webb, 1995). Research indicates that when social workers were accounting (either formally or casually) for their work, the accounts reflected broader theoretical notions of contemporary practice, as well as taken for granted assumptions or lay



theorising (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988; Hall *et al.*, 1997; Taylor and White, 2000; Riemann, 2005; Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006).

### **1.12 The Deployment of Professional Knowledge: Expert Theorising.**

Bull and Shaw (1992) explored the deployment of professional knowledge to support diagnosis in casework. 'They found that social workers tended to draw on preferred theories to understand human circumstance. These, in turn, tended to reflect the most dominant approach/theoretical perspective of the time' (Roscoe *et al.*, 2010, p. 47). It is important to note, however, that dominant understandings shift and develop over time, and that these shifts are reflected in social work education and practice. For example, radical social work emerged in the 1970s alongside movements of feminism and disabilism which influenced values of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice in social work. Many of these theories in the context of social work can be identified as critical social work (Healy, 2005; Fook, 2012).

Critical theory and critical social work is aligned with the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research in the 1930s (Turner, 1996). The core of these ideas rested upon the ideas of Marx and a capitalist society in its extremist form. This broader economic rather than philosophical tradition argued that philosophical concepts should be explored and developed from the economic context which considers class, inequality, oppression and social division (Marcuse, 1972). Whilst such themes are imperative and embedded into current values in social work, how practitioners understand the needs and problems of service users within a wider socio-political context appears to be underrepresented in the accounts of social work practice. Some studies have explored which forms of professional knowledge are drawn on by practitioners in their accounts of practice; for example, Bull and Shaw (1992) 'noted how systems theory was favoured over more linear approaches to causation of people's problems, whilst behaviours on the other hand were referred to in terms of psychodynamic theory' (cited in Roscoe *et al.*, 2010, p. 47). Suffice to note here that this is similar to Scourfield and Pithouse's (2006) research which highlighted how therapeutic social work with children was also dominated by psychodynamic ideas. These ideas have infiltrated into mainstream social work education for decades.

This is argued to have resulted in social workers' reluctance to develop new insights in practice (Payne, 1991).

Scourfield and Pithouse's (2006) interest in theory and knowledge focused on the way in which social workers drew on selective aspects of formal theory to achieve status in the team. 'Theory was argued by the researchers to comprise the interaction of professional and lay knowledge, in as much as reference was made to best practice literature' (cited in Roscoe *et al.*, 2010, p. 48). The choice of theory and of practice issues to theorise, however, was dictated in part by lay assumptions. A similar point to Bull and Shaw's (1992) observations was how, in Scourfield and Pithouse's (2006) study, the team also privileged certain theoretical perspectives over others in the context of child protection work. Again, this 'suggests how theories and methods in social work are selected strategically to maintain an emphasis on professional expertise which serves to support a particular narrative plot' (cited in Roscoe *et al.*, 2010, p.47).

Scourfield and Pithouse (2006) argued that while some cases were understood as requiring a general or routine approach to practice, others were not. Work with sex offenders, for example, was deemed by social workers to warrant specialist professional knowledge/expertise. This study showed how in managing sex offender cases, ideas and concepts were both shared by and familiar to the team. However, it was noted that the tough stance adopted by workers on these cases was deemed necessary by social workers, despite the fact that that this was contrary to the best practice models that were outlined in working with sex offenders. This again highlights the contradictory nature of some of the narratives offered by social workers, and how this related to wider pre-disposed discourses and the moral constructions and assumptions underpinning those labelled as such (sex offenders).

A particularly interesting finding of Scourfield and Pithouse's (2006) study, which echoed other research in care management and social work, was the way in which practitioners regarded therapeutic work with service users as real social work (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988). Whilst this is discussed in detail later under care management accounts, for the moment note how in some cases social work is

viewed in dichotomous ways, influencing how therapeutic social work is viewed as a separate model and outside of local authority/state social work.

In summary, occupational discourse, influenced by word-of-mouth, second hand versions of good practice guidelines (Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006), plus common sense constructions that interrelated with moral constructions (Hall *et al.*, 1999; Taylor and White 2000; Riemann, 2005), illustrates how practitioners deploy these to justify notions of professional expertise. Riemann's (2005) research concludes with an important point: social workers who portrayed special authority in the form of certain knowledge used this to reproduce and reconstitute hierarchies of knowledge, and/or to prevent new insights and approaches from developing. The two elements, lay theorising and formal theorising, are both evident within social work organisational discourses (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988; Taylor and White, 2000; Riemann, 2005; Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006).

Accounts given by social workers are also underpinned by political/professional sub-texts (Bull and Shaw, 1992) which are informed by the historical and socio-political context of social work. The accounts offered by social workers can be contextualised in this wider context by drawing on Geertz's (1973) understanding of a thick description. A thick description reaches down to the level of fine grained linguistic analysis (such as the accounts of social workers), and moves up to wider cultural and historical influences on accounts (e.g. social policy initiatives based on managerialism). This understanding is based on a long tradition of discourse-based sociolinguistic studies and sociological communication which focuses on micro-level interaction processes at work (Roberts and Sarangi, 1995), but does have some limitations as a method of exploring discourses of social work in the context of ideology (see methodology chapter). According to Roberts and Sarangi (1995), this holistic approach to understanding and exploring accounts attends to the smallest of things and aims to understand accounts in a wider context. For example, canons of care management/care co-ordination and casework are set out in policy initiatives in health and social care in adult services. These can be traced back to Richmond's early language of maximising potential, and these institutional imperatives in social work operate in a top down way to transform professional

knowledge (Roberts and Sarangi, 1995). Whilst wider social policies shift and change, they also remain similar in rhetoric and language, showing clear historical traces to early social work and its associated role and identity. These influences lead to readjustments and reinventions in professional knowledge (Roberts and Sarangi, 1995) and the ways in which social workers interpret policy. Historical narratives influence the ways in which social workers make sense of and understand the context of practice (Jones, 2001). Social workers draw on a range of knowledge and contexts to make sense of practice. These cannot be separated from the thick description, which means accounts need to be contextualised within policy, organisational structure and cultural contexts as well as the key arguments/tensions of the social work identity and knowledge base (Ramcharan, Grant, Parry-Jones and Robinson, 1999; Jones, 2001; Postle, 2001, 2002; Carey, 2008, 2012). Notwithstanding all of these wider influences on social work, Scourfield and Pithouse (2006) argued that despite moves towards a more case management approach in social work, social workers do retain some discretion to interpret and moderate policy initiatives in relation to workplace imperatives and practice.

## **Chapter 1, Part 3: Care Management/Care Co-ordination: Ideological and Political Contexts**

### **1.13 Introduction**

This literature review has explored how the nature of social work is constructed around the philosophical, ideological and political contexts of a given time (Butler and Drakeford, 2001). Before exploring literature that captures how practitioners understand and talk about care management, it is important to briefly summarise its historical development within its wider socio-political and ideological contexts. This provides a useful way in which to consider how accounts of care management link to wider narratives and pre-disposed discourses in the context of social work practice.

The welfare state, according to Carey (2008) has been dominated mainly by ideological formations (ideas) associated with neo-liberalism (or its predecessor economic liberalism). Economic liberalism is based on the belief that the state should not intervene in the economy, instead leaving it alone as much as possible to encourage individuals to participate in free and self-regulating markets (Clarke 2005). This can be traced back to classical liberalism based on notions of individualism (ethical idealism). Harvey (2005) summarised neo-liberalism as:

...a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade (p.2).

From the 1990s onwards, social workers operating in social service departments (state social work) were redefined as care managers (Jones, 2001; Carey, 2008, 2012). Care management was aimed at practitioners operating in adult services, and the implementation of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990 saw the care management labour process emerge (Rachman, 1995; Simic, 1995; Postle, 2001). This built upon the earlier Barclay Report implemented during the 1980s, which

stemmed from the long haul of state intervention under Conservative administrations during 1979-1997 (Butler and Drakeford, 2001).

State responsibility was reduced considerably during the Conservative administrations and the personal social services were no longer required to provide in-house services (Butler and Drakeford, 2001). Instead the privatisation of services was encouraged, to promote and develop a mixed economy of care. Drakeford (2000) argues that extending the market place to the provision of public services reduced the burden of social responsibility on the state. The NHS and Community Care Act 1990, underpinned by the powerful influence of neo-liberalist ideology, is pinpointed by Carey (2008) for 'its emphasis upon free market principles and a reduced role for the state' (p. 344). He adds, 'this remains the most dominant ideology to impact at both national and grassroots level over the past three decades' (Carey, 2008, p. 344).

Butler and Drakeford (2001) contend that the neo-liberalist ideology of privatisation and marketisation in social and economic policy sits uneasily with contemporary values and practices of social work. These authors remind us that the radicalisation of social work in the 70s, 80s and 90s is a reminder that the vision of social work is perhaps much grander than its current location and practice allows. The closure of institutions, for example, is one of the most potent expressions of neo-liberalist ideology where the rolling back of the state reinforced the notions of individualism (Carey 2008 b). Community-based services were now to be purchased by the social worker/care manager, creating a purchaser/provider division (Butler and Drakeford, 2001). As a result, a highly competitive community care market developed and the skills of social workers were refined. For example, the Department of Health (2000) in the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* outlined that the skills needed for social work consisted mainly of 'assessment, so that decision-making and care planning are based on sound analysis' (p.37).

The foundation for purchasing and determining whether a service user was eligible for services remains in social work practice to date. This was embedded further into the role of social care by a Conservative government. New Labour's first

contribution to the refinement of the social care and care management task came in March 2001 (Orme, 2001).

In a procedure similar to the action in 1979 creating the Barclay committee (Orme, 2001), a forum of consultants was set up to review the education programme of social work, known then as the DipSW (Diploma in Social Work) which was awarded after a two year programme of training. Accompanied by the modernisation agenda (Modernising Social Services, DOH, 1998), the resulting proposals to change social work education to a three year undergraduate programme saw New Labour's emphasis upon quality implemented. The new frameworks for delivering services, for social work training and workforce planning were key objectives of the modernisation agenda (Orme, 2001). Dobson, the Secretary of State (2000) argued that under New Labour this 'Third Way' for social care moved the focus away from who provides care, and placed it firmly on the quality of services provided (Meeting the Challenge: a strategy for the allied health professionals, 2000). In this, the managerial approach, heavily influenced by empiricism for defining and achieving quality, was further embedded. Performance management frameworks, best value principles, and prescribed checklists and assessment forms were introduced to measure whether these objectives were met (Butler and Drakeford, 2001). Community care assessment procedures are understood as reductionist approaches to social work practice (Howe, 1992, Postle, 2001, 2002). The modernisation agenda, however, set out to develop a skilled and competent workforce despite what is referred to as the rational-technical approach to social work (Orme, 2001).

#### **1.14 Accounts of Care Management**

Despite the number of discourse studies in social work (noted in the earlier part of this chapter), the analysis of accounts of social workers in the context of care management has tended to focus on what is said and its relationship to neo-liberalist ideology, rather than theorising about language use in its occupational context and specifically in the context of discourse analysis. Care management, as the bureau-professional framework or model that is influenced by task-centred

practice, is how workers operating in adult social work undertake its role and tasks to date. The following part of this chapter focuses on the recurring linguistic features of the accounts of social workers.

Research that has explored the perceptions, talk or accounts surrounding care management is captured in the work of Ramcharan *et al.* (1999), Jones (2001), Postle (2001, 2002) and Carey (2008, 2012). These studies have not specifically analysed the language contained within accounts drawing on traditions of discourse analysis. Carey (2012) discusses some of the linguistic features inherent within accounts of care management such as binary oppositions and rhetoric. Notwithstanding this lack of attention to recurring linguistic features (discussed in detail in the methodology chapter), these research studies have captured the perceptions of social work's identity within the context of care management, and point out how this type of bureau-professional framework is viewed as problematic in the context of the social work identity and labour processes (Ramcharan *et al.*, 1999; Jones, 2001; Postle, 2001, 2002; Carey, 2008, 2012). Jones's (2001) research, titled *Voices from the Front Line: State Social Workers and New Labour* illustrates this uncertainty succinctly.

Primarily Jones's (2001) research explored the condition of state (local authority) social workers in England. Based on interviews with experienced social workers, it emphasised how social work was perceived by practitioners to have been transformed into a degraded profession. The majority of the social workers interviewed had been in post for eight years or more, and communicated stress and unhappiness based on frustration aimed at the organisation. Whilst this study does not indicate how many interviews took place, the language in the accounts paints a particular but familiar understanding of contemporary practice. For example, one respondent noted how it was 'much more office based' (p.552) and that contact with 'clients was much more limited' (p.553).

Jones's (2001) research is contextualised within neo-liberalism and New Labour, and shows how social work was digested by practitioners following the Barclay Report and Community Care Act 1990. One practitioner argued that 'being a care manager



was different from being a social worker' (p.553). This was because the role of care management was viewed as mostly related to budgets and paperwork. Social workers claimed to be deskilled because of the restrictions placed on social work, and many social workers based in adult services were looking for alternative employment. This was because the role was seen as 'a job that you do in boxes and you tick the boxes' (p.555). Interrelated with this was the application of eligibility criteria for services: clients who did receive services were described as 'at the top end' (p.555) of need, such as having severe impairments or acute dementia. This resulted in further frustration and stress for practitioners feeling that their hands were tied. Jones (2001) argued that the change in government in 1997 was significant neither for the improvement of services in state social work, nor for the circumstances of clients, concluding that state social work continued to be a grim occupation. According to Storey and Billingham (2001), social work is seen as very stressful because of the nature and organisational structure of social work embedded within managerialist and neo-liberalist ideology.

State social work is located in what is referred to in organisational theory as a mechanistic structure, and this structure is considered to add to and create the pressures and stresses of social work (Storey and Billingham, 2001). Burns and Stalker (1961) point out how mechanistic or bureaucratic structures of organisations (such as local authorities) consist of hierarchal structures consisting of control and authority with vertical communication. There is an expectation of obedience to managers with inflexible and ridged rules and procedures (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Morgan, 2006). Bowersox and Daugherty (1995) argue that such a formalised system or structure of an organisation relates to the degree in which decision making and working relationships are governed by formal rules and standardised policies and procedures. Jones and Fletcher (1996) argue that the structure and organisational climate is regarded as one of the typical sources of stress.

In 2001 and 2002, Postle's research echoed most of Jones's (2001) earlier study. Titled *Working Between the Idea and the Reality*, Postle's (2002) research captured how care management and social work were viewed in the context of ambiguities

and tension. Both structured and semi-structured interviews were employed alongside focus groups to supplement data, and twenty interviews were undertaken with care managers and their line managers. Observations were carried out two days per week in different teams over a period of four months, and the interviews were conducted afterwards; these focused on their uncertainty and uncomfortable position that had been exacerbated by the inception of the NHS and Community Care Act 1990. (Again echoing the dichotomous ways in which social work is represented in social work literature, my own doctoral studies were based on a growing interest in how social workers responded to changes under community care.)

This research captured how social workers reconciled spending more time on paperwork and computers than with service users. Postle (2002) argued that this form of social work practice was reductionist, where a 'finance first' approach to analysing needs under community care was considered the main frustration of social work practice. Postle (2002) claimed that spending time and forming relationships with clients was seen as real social work whereas care management was viewed as reductionist practice. Set organisational processes such as assessments and checklists were viewed as not doing real social work; as one respondent noted, 'You tick the boxes and you do the sums and you're not doing social work' (p.343). Bureaucracy was the main term littered throughout this research, and was argued to compromise the quality of relationships with service users.

Computer systems implemented to save time spent on paperwork were reported as inadequate, and often duplicated rather than replaced paperwork. As a result accounts used phrases like 'less real social work' and referred to a perceived loss of a former role. This echoed previous research by Jones (2001) which outlined that the main contention of practitioners was that they considered they had less time for face-to-face or one-to-one work. One respondent in Postle's (2002) study uses the term 'finance first. Client last' (p.341) and this type of account demonstrated how social workers had made sense of purchasing services within restricted

community care budgets. The same respondent added that 'this myth of a needs-led assessment is complete garbage' (p.340).

Postle's (2002) theme 'spending time on paperwork' (p.341) captured how social workers responded to bureau-professional frameworks within care management. Using terms like 'administration' (p.341) and 'bureaucracy' (p.342), these concepts were deployed by one respondent who claimed that these types of activity were minimal previous to the Community Care Act 1990. What was seen as the most problematic aspect to care management was that practitioners 'feel more remote from the client' (p.342).

In the same study, the speed of social work under care management was also viewed as problematic by those implementing the policy framework, mainly owing to a perceived increase of risk to clients. Care managers did not like the 'quick in and out, do the assessment, do the review, close it' (p.345) approach. The wider ideology of managerialism in the form of performance targets and limited resources had resulted in one respondent becoming resigned to the notion that 'there's nothing we can do' (p.345) as social workers. This often caused conflict, which Postle (2002) themed as staff morale.

In both of these studies capturing how individuals made sense of their practice and the types of word choice within accounts, care managers often referred to the bureaucracy and administrative tasks of social work as deskilling. These ways of talking can be argued to have become the common sense and well understood arguments of contemporary state social work. In essence, this means that these ideas do not subsequently need to be spelt out in detail for social workers, as they will have heard these ways of talking during socialisation within occupational cultures of social work (Wetherell, 1998). These types of taken for granted or lay theorising processes in understanding care management (and wider social work practice) subsequently become the well-recognised and reconstituted discourses surrounding its identity. Notions such as the tick box approach can also be identified in Carey's (2008) research.

Carey (2008) undertook research between 2000 and 2003 exploring the use and application of ideology by a group of care managers in the United Kingdom within their work environments. As part of a PhD thesis and utilising ethnographic<sup>4</sup> analysis, 44 care managers were interviewed and observed in England. This research considered the impact of and use of ideology by highlighting the universal impact of neo-liberalism on the care management labour process. Carey's (2008) broad themes categorised from the respondents' accounts were identified as 'economic pragmatism' (p.348), 'the new social work' (p.351) and 'proletarianization and professionalism' (p.353).

Carey (2008) provides three case studies (one is presented in each theme), but the wider data set is referred to throughout this research. This research also explored how the ideology of managerialism and neo-liberalism had infiltrated the care management labour process, and how social workers grappled with this in conjunction with their motivations and perceptions of what constituted social work. The main aim of this research was to explore the use of ideology in practice, such as Marxism and feminism. It is not clear how observations contributed to or added to this research, but this study echoes similar choices of language in accounts surrounding care management captured by Jones (2001) and Postle (2001, 2002).

Under economic pragmatism, Carey (2008) outlined how respondents expressed their surprise with state social work, in contrast to their prior assumptions of what constituted practice. This resulted in a gap between the harsh realities on the ground, and a set of perceived notions of counselling and therapeutic interventions referred to by Carey (2008) as the 'mythical constructs' (p.349) of social work. One respondent argued how deskilling care management was and how restricted powers were sources of frustration within this role. Notwithstanding this, this respondent also stated that their motivation for entering social work was based on economic motives and reasons, hence the theme chosen by Carey (2008) being 'economic pragmatism' (Marcuse, 1972).

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<sup>4</sup> Ethnographic research is understood as a naturalistic research method or sets of methods which involves the researchers participating in the lives of people they are studying for an extended period of time (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983).

The second theme of this study, 'new social work', under New Labour illuminated how there were some counter-narratives/discourses offered in contrast to the grim picture painted of care management by the previous respondent. Whilst this respondent noted 'there's too much bureaucracy in the job' (p.351), they later stated 'you can find a way around [the bureaucracy], and make time for carers and clients' (p.351). As this study noted, the social worker as care manager can still utilise their skills despite the prevailing narrative of adult social work being deskilled and based on a box ticking approach. One quote sums this up succinctly: 'I've counselled people during assessments and also done a bit of group work with families' (p.351). Despite these contradictions, this research was more concerned with how ideology is used or resisted within social work.

Carey's (2008) third theme, 'proletarianization and professionalism', captured how the routinisation of care management and social work practice was in the main viewed as deskilling. Amongst other accounts, one social worker recounted how terrible they felt when undertaking assessments knowing that there was no money to implement identified need (Carey, 2008). In line with the aims of Carey's research of how ideology underpins their practice, one respondent stated how their 'hands are tied' (p.353), and that bureaucracy, procedures and management restricted any freedom in their work. This respondent argued 'there's very limited skill involved – answering the telephone, photocopying, writing reports and filling out the assessment forms several times' (p.353).

In the conclusion of this research, Carey (2008) noted how Marxism and Althusser's ideas appear to offer little to practitioners adopting them to form resistance strategies in a neo-liberalist context within care management. Carey (2008) argues how these ideas can help the practitioner 'break free' (p.353) of these discourses based on imposing ideologies by discussing Gramsci's (1971) work and the capacity of agency. Arguing that these theorists provide a way in which practitioners can free themselves, Carey (2008) does not offer the reader any insight into how this can be achieved or operationalized by way of extending these ideas to practice or education. With no pragmatic method with which to counteract dominant

discourses of care management, this researcher later employs case study research and further evidences the rise of cynicism in state social work (Carey 2012).

This later study does begin to focus on some recurring linguistic features inherent within accounts of state social work, yet these are not contextualised within organisational discourses or discourse-analytic methods (see methodology chapter for further discussion and definition). Referring in its title to 'the rise of cynicism' in state social work, this research study understands cynicism as an emotional reaction to external and structural changes. Broadly discussing three themes – 'the organisational survivor' (Carey, 2012, p.8), 'the disenfranchised sceptic' (p.11) and 'the altruist' (p.13), this ethnographic research was based on interviews with fourteen qualified social workers in post for five or more years.

The first theme, 'the organisational survivor', discussed how rhetoric (understood as language used to persuade a particular audience) was digested by practitioners on the ground floor. Practitioners in this study (n=10) argued how rhetoric such as empowerment, derived from social policy initiatives, resulted in a gap between the realities on the ground floor and what was communicated in such policies. Carey (2012) aligned this type of rhetoric with 'ironising', a term used by Potter (1996) to denote a concept or abstraction which seeks to reveal facts as social constructions and become the taken for granted. For example, concepts such as choice are considered ironised by the cynical practitioner in Carey's research because they are viewed as supporting particular social constructs which have hidden motives. Linked to Althusser's (1984) notion of ideology, this resulted in what Carey (2008) argued was an imaginary relationship with the social work role, and further manifests itself as concepts considered to be based on cultural and political myths (Barthes, 1972; Lévi-Strauss, 1972).

The second theme presented a bleak picture of the care manager operating under state social work. Presented as the disenfranchised sceptic, the respondent presented here stated 'my commitment is minimal to the job' (p.11), and how 'I don't really care much about providing a service as such: the key is to do the paperwork' (p.11). This resulted in apathy and cynicism as it was perceived that if

you did embrace the characteristics or concepts of social work, 'you won't last long if you walk around feeling empathy and love for every client' (p.11). This case study was understood by Carey (2012) as taking on the identity of 'the debt collector' (p.12) where there is a sense of detachment from clients.

Finally, 'the altruist' was one of the types of social worker categorised by Carey as being more interested in client-centred approaches (p.13), but this resulted in the social worker viewing practice in binary ways. This respondent enjoyed the work, but argued that there were inadequate resources to respond to service users' needs. This created conflict in this particular case, where professional identity resulted in what Carey (2012) described as a 'binary reasoning process' (p.14). Such a process resulted in the social worker being viewed as the expert alongside a less able other (service user). Frustration in contrast was based mainly on the imposed targets derived from the organisational structures of social work, not the micro-elements of practice with service users.

Despite Carey's (2012) enthusiasm for identifying linguistic features in these accounts, such as the use of rhetoric and binary oppositions, research to date in care management presents these accounts by drawing on a range of theories to understand each of them. None of these studies have systematically studied these accounts explicitly in the context of their intertextual relationship with wider voices that stem from historical discourses and cultures utilising critical discourse analytic traditions. Apart from Carey's (2012), rarely do these studies analyse what is meant by 'traditional' or 'face-to-face' social work, or the possible contradictions inherent within these accounts, or fully identify or explain how discourses interpellate the construction of social work practitioners' identity (both personally and professionally) during socialisation processes such as practice placements of students.

It is to this point that this thesis now turns, explaining how critical discourse analysis (as a means of building on previous discourse-related research in social work) provides innovative opportunities to analyse the accounts of social workers in a community care (adult) context. To date, no studies analysing the language of social

work draw on CDA utilising Fairclough's (1992) Three Dimensional Model, and so the following chapter illuminates how these ideas can be employed in social work research, education and practice to build on previous ethnographic studies in social work.

### **1.15 Original contribution to Knowledge.**

This thesis makes an original contribution to social work research particularly by building on previous discourses studies in social work (outlined in literature review). It does so by employing Fairclough's CDA. The original contribution to knowledge made in this thesis is as follows and is outlined fully in chapter six of this thesis.

- 1) Illustrate the application and the potential of transdisciplinary methodologies in and for critical social work;
- 2) Added to discourse studies in social work particularly in the context of adult social work;
- 3) Demonstrates, through the application of narrative and discourses analytic tools, the relationship between the personal and professional self;
- 4) Outlines and devises an innovative narrative method for understanding the personal and political self in social work (Titled: Narratives, Identity and Praxis, p. 262) and,
- 5) Emphasises and advocates transcendental philosophy in the context of critical social science.



## Chapter 2, Part 1: Methodology – Paradigms, Ontology and Epistemology

### 2.1 Introduction

Methodology refers to approaches aligned to research methods, which encompass the theory and philosophy of a given paradigm or worldview (Hardwick and Worsley, 2011; McLaughlin, 2012). Paradigms provide a way of breaking down the complexity of a world view which tells the researcher what to do (Denzin, 1989; Denzin and Lincoln 2003). The term originates from Kuhn (1970) who argued that paradigms represent accepted examples of a scientific practice including laws, theories, applications, experiment and instruments. Representing a world view or reality, they define for its holder the nature of understanding that world from a particular set of theoretical assumptions (Guba, 1990). It is a concept that characterises three basic questions in social science research: the ontology (what is the nature of reality), epistemology (the nature of the relationship between the knower and the known) and methodology (how the enquirer will find out knowledge). This research adopts the paradigm illustrated in Table 1, which also shows the ontological, epistemological and methodological principles and choices adopted for this study. Their rationale will be illustrated throughout part one of this chapter.

**Table 1: Chosen Methodology**

<b>Paradigm</b>	Critical Theory /Critical Social Work
<b>Ontology</b>	(Critical) Transcendental Realism
<b>Epistemology</b>	Interpretivism (Social Constructionism/ dialectic)
<b>Methodology</b>	Participative (Critical Ethnography and Critical Discourse Analysis)

(Adapted from Guba, 1990)

### 2.2 Methodological Choices

Ontological assumptions can be subsumed within two main strands of thought. The first is that there are objectivist theories where reality is considered outside of action or social phenomena. Alluding to the idea that there is a real world out there,

it is seen as apart from our subjective awareness (realism). In social work these ideas are understood as either radical structuralism, adopting objectivist ideas in understanding the world, and aligned at initiating change at the structural (macro) level; or as the Fixers, a functionalist paradigm which considers that re-establishing order and equilibrium is the way to fix people's problems, and aligned at initiating change at the meso (cultural) level (Howe, 1987). These ideas can be aligned to positivism, an objectivist paradigm concerned with how things work and how things really are (Kuhn, 1970; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). This tradition influenced many social scientists during the 1920s and 30s. Statistical methods and survey research dominated this branch of theories, viewing these as sufficient ways with which to prove truth, reality or knowledge (Kuhn, 1970; Guba, 1990; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Associated with notions of physical science, outcomes, universal laws and neutral observation, positivism and empiricism (quantitative research) were embraced throughout the history of social work, justifying the need for the profession to have scientific principles in the endeavour to work with the poor. During the 1930s in casework, these traditions led to presenting human experience through the use of numerical categories and the language of outcomes which is still prevalent today.

The second main strand views ontology as something that is essentially grounded in the person we really are. These kinds of theory assume that there is no external reality outside our thoughts, actions and practices, and that reality is social (relativism). Understood as the constructivist/interpretivist paradigm, this set of theories sees the world from a subjectivist viewpoint. In the reaction against positivism and empiricism, constructivist/interpretivist paradigms provided opportunities for social work to problematise modernist assumptions that underpin practice and research (Parton, 2000; Pease and Fook, 1999; Healy, 2005; Fook, 2012). These ideas pinpointed how relativities were no longer marginalised but were central to social work practice and research (Parton and O'Byrne, 2000; Milner, 2001). Within research, these types of complexity are analysed within epistemology against their consistency with the paradigm adopted for the scientific enquiry.

Epistemology, a term used in philosophy, investigates the different kinds of knowledge and how we have come to acquire and understand that knowledge. It considers the scope and justification of knowledge alongside the origins, limitations, methods, and validity (truth) of a particular knowledge (Delanty and Strydom, 2003; Sarantakos, 2005). This includes exploring the relationship between subjective and objective components of reality, as well as the definitive problems of defining what is true or real and how this is investigated. As Audi (1998) points out, philosophers have given a great deal of thought to these matters, the nature of perceiving a social reality and how we have come to know what we know. This is because theories about how individuals construct and come to understand or know reality (subjectivity) can take a variety of forms.

Constructivist/interpretivist paradigms replace the subject-object dualism in epistemology with the idea of interactionism, which is primarily concerned with understanding and interpreting reality and the subject in a social context (Howe, 1987; Guba, 1990). This reflects the interpretive turn in social science having implications for what we know about the world, as there was a persistent claim that science alone was good enough to measure reality/truth. These ideas argued that any reality or knowledge can only be understood to be socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Aligned with the symbolic interactionism paradigm in sociology, this range of theories is concerned with studying human group life and human conduct (Blumer 1969). Social psychologists Mead (1934) and Dewey ([1922]1983), the key theorists here, investigated social life by focusing on symbolic means of communication.

Here, the individual mind and self is constructed within social processes. Mead (1934) drew on ideas of Kant ([1787] 2003), who conceived that the basic forms of the world are produced in the mind. Kant argued that we can obtain knowledge about the world, but argued it was only ever subjective knowledge in the sense that it is filtered through human consciousness<sup>5</sup>. The world can be experienced not in

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<sup>5</sup> This thesis adopts Descartes' ([1641] 1984) understanding of consciousness which is considered as states of thinking. It is used by Descartes as a thinking process which includes aspects such as doubt, affirmation, will and imagination.

itself, but is understood only as an appearance that has been structured by our cognitive processes/schema. Schema is the function of processes of imagination, through which concepts, theories and ideas are combined. These consist of a pattern imposed on a reality or experience to assist the person in explaining it (Harrison-Barbet, 2001). Yet in the context of language, Mead (1943) argued that it is the on-going social interaction that constitutes the contents of mind.

Mead (1943), through the distinction 'me' and 'I', highlighted how the self as 'me' is a cognitive object, based on an accumulation of interpretations derived from a process of reflection on oneself. This reflection is drawn upon in the context of social norms, values and beliefs of a given society/social order. 'I' on the other hand is understood as the spontaneous self that consists of and reflects our values, creativity and innate characteristics (Mead, 1934). In contrast to constructivists, who approach human experience in terms of individual psychology solely, for Mead (1943) any reality is intelligible only in terms of social processes; and so human experience is seen as predominately social which inform constructions of the self and self-consciousness. This is because the social is understood to precede any human experience and mental representation of reality, so Mead's approach represents a dialectical view of interaction and subjectivity (Mead, 1934).

So when we talk of experience, it has both objective and subjective components: it is objective because we have an idea outside of ourselves that allows something to be categorised, and there are subjective components to experiences that allow us to describe and evaluate the experience. Kant ([1787]2003) argued that there was a real world, but that it can only be known from a particular perspective, and from a particular conceptual schema or cultural view coloured by environment and context (Harrison-Barbet, 2001). Mead's concepts showed how, through conversation, members are socialised or made to conform to a social system. In essence, individuals will alternate between the concepts 'I' and 'me' in playing a particular role or game during multiple (inter-) actions. What Mead was alluding to was that each person can have multiple social selves, drawing on a range of cultural and social symbols depending upon which game or role is being played (through the enactment of personal/social identities). In the context of this study, the self as

social worker is social because the social actor is born into an existing society, but the self is bound by language (shared symbolic meanings) and interaction. Roles, then, in social work are tentative because they arise as products of social interaction. This draws attention to the performativity of language in a social context and the management of the presentation of self.

Goffman (1963) and Geertz's (1973) work is aligned with those which study the structure, functions and meanings behind language (Sarantakos, 2005). Here, language is viewed as a precondition for thought, whereas the cognitivists argued that reality is constituted in thought. Burr (1995) contends that the way people think, the very categories and concepts which are formed are provided by the individual's language use. Rather than seeing reality solely as based on cognitive processes (attitudes), emphasis is placed on the social construction of attitudes, social groups and identities through the deployment of language (Delanty and Strydom, 2003).

This is because ways of understanding the world do not stem from objective reality here, but from other people, both past and present (Burr, 1995). Based on social truths, norms and beliefs, cultures and societies have a range of conceptual systems with which to understand reality, and so no reality can outweigh the others in this tradition (Lamnek, 1995; Luhnmann, 1997; Lueger, 2000). Here an account or explanation of any one thing is not privileged over any other, but is grounded in its historical and cultural context. This epistemic position assumes that events and accounts of any 'thing' or object are dependent upon the context in which they arise (Garfinkel, 1984).

The social order of social work pre-dates the mental representations (schemas/ ideas) of social workers. In their socialisation with adult services, individuals will deploy significant symbols (forms of communication) in their understanding of what constitutes practice. This schema or cultural view is inextricably linked to environment and context influencing the sense of self (personal and social identities), as derived from reflection and interaction. These schemas not only influence practice, but can hinder the social worker in adopting alternative symbols

or schemas that might represent alternative realities of social work. This illustrates the interpretivist/constructivist rationale for this research at the epistemological level, where social workers' reality is primarily understood as social in origin, but contains within it significant symbols and schemas (discourses) inextricably linked to the historical and ideological contexts of social work *per se*.

### **2.3 Social Constructionism and Discourse**

Interpretivists often adopt discursive psychological approaches which understand written and spoken language (discourse) as constructions and a reflection of an external world oriented towards social 'action' (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). What this means is that any knowledge derived from the subject is sustained by social processes where knowledge (construction) and social action/practice are inextricably linked (Burr, 1995). The work of Gergen (1985, 1994) Potter and Wetherell (1987), and Edwards and Potter (1992) viewed mental processes as constituted through social, discursive activities (collective social practices) rather than being solely internal (cognitive).

Within this epistemology, discourse constructs objects, subjects and experiences, including a sense of self. This is conceptualised as constitutive of experience (social life) rather than being representational (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Parker 1992; Burman and Parker, 1993; Burr, 1995). Assumed to be a complex form of cultural and psychological products, language is understood as 'constructed in ways that make things happen and which bring social worlds into being' (Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001 p.16). Discourse is thus viewed as functional (Potter and Wetherell, 1987), as a designed activity, what is produced in language, what is heard and read, and also in relation to things which are not said (Wetherell *et al.*, 2001). This active construction is viewed as organised for that specific context. This is where discursive practices, understood as what people draw on collectively to organise their conduct, are an important component of analysing social work discourses. Discursive practices are how 'specific talk is produced, received, and interpreted and shape written (text) and spoken discourse. They order the features which appear and the selection and phases of words' (Wetherell

*et al.*, 2001, p.22), and encompass the processes involved in creating, writing, speaking, reading and hearing (Fairclough, 1992).

These traditions in social science enquiry primarily adopt relativist approaches to the study of discourse, and according to Willig (2007) fail to fully theorise why people use certain constructions and not others. Subjective realities are viewed as constituted through language and discursive practices, but are considered as situated language use or language use in everyday texts and talk (Wetherell and Potter, 1992; Shotter 1993; Shotter and Gergen, 1994a). Discourse here is said to construct our lived reality and the self is understood as a discursive subject adopting subject positions within discourses available (Wetherell and Potter, 1992).

Subject positions are understood as positions within a discourse which places the subject (person) in culturally recognised patterns of talk, for example a wife or a mother. In other words, investment in that phenomenon contributes to the creation of that reality (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). In the context of social work, social workers will deploy a range of subject positions when accounting for the work they do, and these will communicate values, ideals and beliefs of the world they are part of. Here, people are seen to actively draw on or deploy discourses as resources, as well as being producers and products of discourse. Fairclough (2003) cautions us about this narrow perspective, which understands discourse as merely referring to objects which are taken to be given reality by the subject. Instead, he argues that discourse is in an active relation to reality and that discourse, viewed in its dialectical context, avoids the pitfalls of overemphasising the construction of 'social' in discourses, instead giving equal weight to the social determination of discourse.

This is because relativist approaches to language are considered morally relative and apolitical (Parker, 1998). Extreme relativist ideas expressed under some forms of postmodernism or hermeneutics abandon the notion of reality altogether (Sarantakos, 2005). Hermeneutics focuses on the systematic investigation of text interpretation as well as psychological and cultural interpretation (Delanty and Strydom, 2003), but is criticised for failure to account for the role of power in shaping meaning and interpretation (Kuhn, 1970; Rorty, 1979; Fuller, 1993). Social

constructionism is criticised for reducing social reality solely to a continuous process of creation by human agency (Parker, 1998). Parker (1998) argues that this led to the problem of how one is then to decide between alternative perspectives and versions of reality: if everything is a matter of our constructions, realities are considered themselves as a multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations (Parker, 1998). Here, defining what is true or real, or can be attributed as truth or reality, becomes problematic in this epistemology. In assuming that all knowledge of the world derives from a variety of perspectives and interpretations (Burr, 1995), social constructionism in its more radical forms implies we cannot uphold the existence of any reality at all outside of language (Denemark, Ekström, Jakobsen and Karlsson, 1997).

Whilst it is assumed discourse produces knowledge, not the things in themselves, and has a relationship to historical and cultural social systems, as Lemke (1995) points out these social systems can have a different ontology from the people who create, inhabit and reproduce them, even though social systems and the individuals that constitute them are interdependent. This can be aligned to a third strand of ontological and epistemological traditions.

## **2.4 Guiding Paradigm: Critical Theory and Critical Social Work**

This third strand of thinking has focused on possible mixed ontological positions where the assumption is that reality consists of both objective social facts and subjective interpretations (critical realism). These ontological positions explore whether a reality or social phenomenon is understood as being either out there (objective), or constructed internally (subjective), or both (Delanty and Strydom, 2003). In paradigms for social work practice, radical humanism is considered to have origins in critical theory and to be aligned with both subjectivist and objectivist traditions (Howe, 1987; Healy, 2005; Fook, 2012). For example, a wide range of approaches such as community-based social work alongside feminism and postmodernism are embraced here (Pease and Fook, 1999; Fook, 2012). Change in social work targets change at a variety of levels (micro, meso, and macro), through



consciousness raising and dialogue aimed at the subjective level but influencing wider social practices (Healy, 2005; Fook, 2012).

Political and contextual trends in social work are said to limit social worker's critical engagement with the wider context of the work that they do (Parton, 2000). According to Ferguson (2003, 2006) this 'influenced a paradigm of practice that seeks to reconstruct the idealised theoretical prescriptions of social work' (cited in Roscoe and Madoc-Jones (2009, p.10). In other words, it seeks to challenge oppressive practices, which consist of a variety of fixed ideas of service users' problems which can otherwise be sustained and reinforced. Critical social work draws upon Ife's (1997) *Critical Practice* and Pease and Fook's (1999) *Postmodern Critical Perspectives*. Assumed to be emancipatory educational methods, these enable people to see the links between their experiences and the material conditions and dominant ideology of society (Fay, 1987). The capacity of critical theories to explain sources of oppression in society and take action to transform them is considered a useful tool in the raising of consciousness.

Whether considered philosophical, political or sociological, critical theory embraces a variety of theoretical positions underpinned by a reaction to positivism, and critically deconstructs the notion of a unitary truth that can be known by one way or method in social science enquiry (Comstock, 1982; Healy 2005). Deconstruction associated with Derrida's methods of textual criticism involves unpacking, exploring and understanding the unspoken and implicit assumptions that underpin thoughts and values (Harrison-Barbet, 2001). It embraces a way of logic inspired by Marx, Hegel, Kant, Foucault and Derrida, and can be aligned by the commonality of scientific research with a socio-political purpose (Bernstein, 1990; Lennon and Whitford, 1994; DePoy and Gitlin, 1998). These theories are grounded in the critique of the dominant ideology of the day, and provide a way in which to critically deconstruct social work discourses, exploring and analysing how these might guide practice (Habermas, 1971; Giroux, 1983; Fay, 1987).

Imperative to critical social work, critical theory shares an emancipatory agenda. Finn (1994) argues that a major challenge facing social work has been the 'call for

change-oriented, value-based models of knowledge development that address people, power and praxis' (p. 25). (Praxis is a form of reflection in action, understood as the relationship between theory (what we think we know) and practice (what we do as a result). In social work, these ideas are concerned with evoking praxis potential through critical dialogue (Freire, 1970; Fook, 2012). Bernstein (1970) asserts that critical social science is praxis-oriented research which seeks to recover the critical reflection in social disciplines. Thus, how social institutions such as the welfare state condition social regulation, unequal distribution and power. Praxis thus consists of practical action-orientated ways of generating knowledge with the aim of catalysing political or social change (Bernstein, 1970). Critical theory methodologies juxtapose empirical and interpretive accounts to facilitate its dialectical and critical aims (Comstock, 1982; Guba, 1990).

Objectivism here is concerned with socially formed patterns that impinge upon people's daily lives as unquestioned boundaries, acknowledging how these are historically formed and represent human struggles (Guba, 1990; Harrison-Barbet, 2001). Analysing the manner in which lived experiences can be distorted by false consciousness and ideology, these theories are concerned with reductions in the illusions of human experiences (Harrison-Barbet, 2001). False consciousness and ideology are firmly established ideas in sociology which differ in theoretical assumptions, but in general refer to the ideals we develop in our thoughts (schemas/ideas) in abstract terms, and how these compare to the lived experience of reality. Marx, Hegel and Althusser analyse this concept from a variety of theoretical perspectives (Lancaster, 1959; Harrison-Barbet, 2001). Hegel pinpointed how the state developed a unifying idea of family, giving meaning to what constitutes a family. All subsequent policies in government reflected these ideals, imposing order on the population. Consequently, anyone stepping outside these ideals will become the deviant, for example 'problem families' (Lancaster, 1959). These ideological formations underpinning policy objectives in government subsequently provide the moral platform from which the social worker operates.

Critical theory adopts dialectical ways of understanding reality and denotes a philosophy that can be understood as a form of logic, a way of seeing the world; it can be aligned with Descartes, Marx and Hegel's significant developments of this philosophy. Hegel argued that the multiple systems which make up modern society could be understood as parts of a whole. This is a form of logic based on the fact that any truth is viewed in opposition to false, and is in a continual process of opposition and reconciliation; hence, nothing is absolute (Lancaster, 1959). Reality always shows an identity of opposites and is full of contradictions, and these contradictions are never complete. For Hegel, this is his logic and the opposing point of view is simply not common sense, but rather an opposing philosophy, logic and way of seeing things. What this means is that any reality consists of two opposing components. This includes the thesis and antithesis which interact and influence with one another to form a synthesis (Morgan and Burrell, 1979). This synthesis, the dialectic, is the form of logic. So what we have is an argument between two different philosophies.

For example, any reality of social work comprises two opposing forces. One force is the thesis of social work, understood as the ideals located in ethics and values (socially constructed), which arguably include aspects of false consciousness. The second force is the antithesis of its ideals: a profession located in a realist context of social structures or state social work, based on positivist rational-technical principles said to provide a platform in which to initiate those values. Understood as critical social work (Pease and Fook, 1999; Fook, 2012), these ideas highlight the contradictions of social workers' role (Corrigan and Leonard, 1978; Dominelli and McLeod, 1989). This form of social work analyses how social structures such as the welfare state impact upon individuals (social workers) seeking to limit the damage of these structures. It incorporates a dialectical view of human behaviour which recognises that structures are (re)created by and through the actions of people (Dominelli, 1997).

## **2.5 Participatory Approaches in Social Work Education: A Problem-oriented Research Dialogue**

Social workers responses to oppressive social structures remain largely theoretical, since practical strategies to address these in education or communicative action in the context of self-awareness/consciousness are rarely discussed in the literature (Jessup and Rogerson, 1999). The work of Althusser, Foucault, Hegel, Fairclough and Freire (amongst others) provides new opportunities to bridge this gap. In signifying a change in relation to meaning, that is, how some discourses in social work might now be taken for granted based on cynicism (Carey 2012), these conditions of existence can no longer be assumed. My study analyses how the social organisation of social work accounts derived from social and political consequences in social work might also be contested. Critical social science embodies regulatory principles and ideas where any knowledge concerning reality or truth is contextualised within history and ideology (Guba, 1990; Alvesson and Willmott, 1996). The intention of critical theory in social work is to challenge the taken for granted assumptions surrounding its knowledge, truth and practice drawn from ideology and historical contexts, and to counter the development of oppressive institutions and practices (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996).

The broader aims of critical social work are based on methods for initiating personal and societal change (Healy, 2005; Fook, 2012). These can be aligned with a problem-oriented approach (van Dijk, 1995), and so research here is based on a highly context-sensitive and democratic approach that takes an ethical position on social issues (Huckin, 1997). Participatory action is dialectical, with a focus on bringing about change through the raising of consciousness in the context of helping individuals free themselves (Creswell 2007). These approaches are completed 'with' others, not 'on' or 'to' others, and indicate how research methods are not just an issue of an appropriate tool, but also a statement of the 'positionality' of the researcher – of how one considers the world can be known and drawn upon from an ethical standpoint (McLaughlin, 2012). Positionality is vital in critical ethnography research, and forces the researcher to acknowledge their own power, privileges and biases just as they are denouncing the power structures that

surround their subjects (Thomas, 1993). (See section 1.5 for further discussion on critical ethnography.)

Freire (1970) uses critical dialogue here, understood to raise awareness and to promote change as a result of dialogue. This method, intended to foster the ability to reflect on the world in a philosophical and historical way, involves critical dialogue that nurtures critical thinking. This is part of the process of social change, at both subjective and political levels. The aim here is to awaken political consciousness of the power of ideology and self-awareness in the context of the discourses available in which to account for contemporary social work. This methodological framework for education transcends understandings of ideology and crosses boundaries of positivism in the bridge between social oppression and subjective change, and retains its importance for analysing individual material conditions (history, culture, society) in their interpersonal context. Understood as the process of conscientisation, this refers to helping learners to become aware of the nature of these discourses and their power; and, in turn, to act to change them (Freire, 1970). Concerned with identifying who has power over whom and how this is maintained in hegemonic processes, the activist positionality in this research aims to liberate social work learners and practitioners from constructions of social work drawn from wider historical, occupational and cultural contexts. This is because these traditions embrace the concept of hegemony, aligned with the work of Gramsci (1971).<sup>6</sup> Discourse here is understood as a form of domination over economic, political, cultural and ideological domains of society. As respondents are encouraged to recover their own minds, these ideas can be aligned with the radical humanist paradigm in social work which believes that change must begin at the subjective level and draws attention to the social workers' agency (Howe, 1992; Fook, 2012). This acknowledges that certain concepts of social work can produce oppressive rather than liberating forms of social work practice (Jessup and Rogerson, 1999).

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<sup>6</sup> Gramsci's (1971) notion of hegemony is based on the basic idea that government and the state cannot enforce control over any particular culture or structure unless other more intellectual and sophisticated methods are employed. These hegemonic discourses are understood as pre-existing the subject (individual) before they are subverted (Weiss and Wodak, 2003).

If language is constructed, it can be deconstructed and reconstructed; and, as Dominelli (1997) notes, people are knowing subjects with the capacity for acting and reacting to the situations they find themselves in. In the context of social work education, these can be understood as liberatory educational methods where learners are encouraged to read the world around them, to be critical and to think for themselves, rather than to take what they read or hear at face value (Saleebey and Scanlon, 2005). This intellectual skill does not presuppose any particular ideological affiliation, but is aligned with participatory dialogic methods (Breeze, 2011). Whilst critical pedagogy knowledge cannot be neutral, this does not necessarily undermine its status as reliable knowledge. But it does imply posing the question of knowledge for whom and for what and in what context (Morrow and Torres, 1995). The following model (Figure 1) demonstrates my developed educationalist approach of critically deconstructing discourses of social work, and directly links to the pilot study/fieldwork of this research. This is discussed further in section 2.6 and returned to in the final chapter where the use of critical questioning is combined with a narrative-based method. Section 2.5 illustrates this process fully, and the final chapter of this thesis expands and builds on this model, providing a reflexive model for social work practice, education and further research.

## **2.6 Towards a Critical Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Social Work Discourses**

Based on problem-posing pedagogy and my positionality as researcher with respondents (Freire and Frei Betto, 1985), this study has utilised principles of critical ethnography which is understood as conventional ethnography but with a political purpose (Thomas, 1993). These principles informed the qualitative rationale and guided the fieldwork during this research. This method is returned to in the conclusion which highlights the process and its application in more detail, illuminating the use of critical deconstruction techniques in social work education and practice in a narrative and discourse analytic framework.

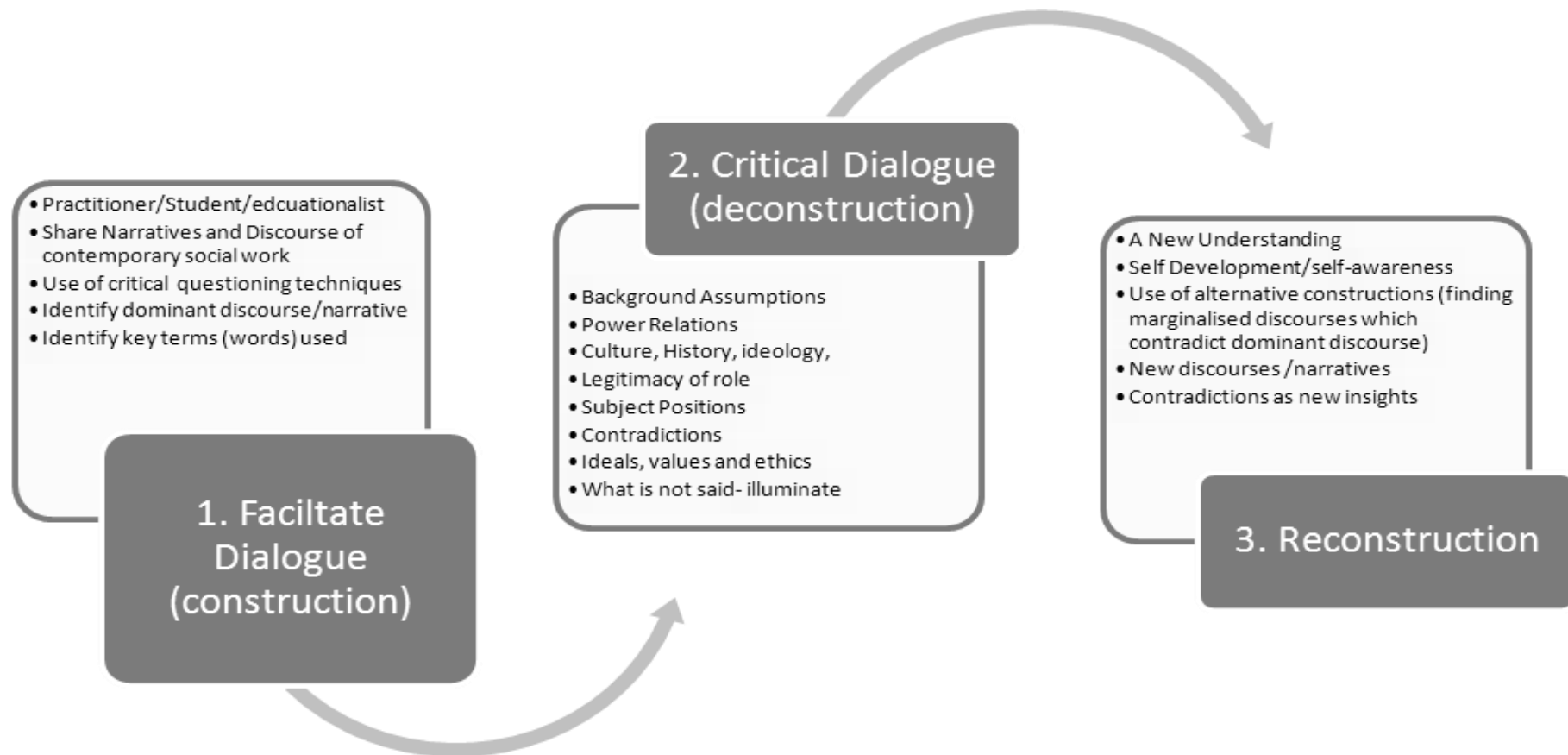


Figure 1: 'Narratives, Identity and Praxis' (adapted from Roscoe, Carson and Madoc-Jones, 2011, p. 51).

## **2.7 Critical Ethnography and Critical Discourse Analysis: Qualitative and Interdisciplinary Rationale**

In following the logic of contextualism in qualitative research, which is understood as understanding events and beliefs within their social context (Bryman, 2004), this research commits to examining social entities as wholes. In essence, the context is to be researched in its entirety (see section 1.3). This is because social work involves a range of rich and complex networks of contexts (Shaw and Gould, 2001). As the interests of this study include the relationship between agency, professional socialisation and culture, the cultural context is imperative in this research, as this provides ways to analyse how professional meanings are negotiated, communicated and subsequently 'performed' to in the context of practice (Pithouse, 1998).

Culture is understood here as a semiotic one (Weber, [1922], 1978) where each person is viewed as having interpreted their reality drawn from their wider social order (Geertz, 1973). These interpretations include the deployment of symbolic signs (discourses) to account for social work. Concerned with the way people make sense of their surroundings or context, ethnography studies the culture from within (Garfinkel, 1988). van Dijk (2011) highlights how any cultural dimension in the analysis of language needs an ethnographic stance. This is because communities consist of practice, thoughts and discourses which and are not solely reducible to social groups or institutions.

Ethnography is a term which refers to methods for describing interactional particulars, and in this study the ethnography of communication is the main focus of my research; that is, the communicative habits of a particular community (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983; Stoddart, 1986; Talmy, 2010). Yet is it not sufficient to merely describe how discourse emerges from culture; in critical social work, this requires an explanatory as well as a descriptive discourse method in order to analyse the broader cultural and structural contexts of social work practice. This acknowledges that respondents' accounts are not simply (more or less) accurate reflections of reality and truth, but are ideologically embedded (Scott, 1991). As such, critical ethnography is an important synthesis of theories as it



focuses on the ways that social structure is (or is not) instantiated, accommodated, resisted, or transformed in the micro-politics of everyday life (Talmy, 2010). These approaches explore the interrelationship of ideology, hegemony and culture, in collaboration with research participants (Talmy, 2010). Krzyżanowski (2011) argues that discourse analysis adds rigor to critical ethnography; and whilst ethnography in critical-analytic research has always been there, in more recent years CDA frameworks have been combined with this tradition to provide more in-depth exploration of problem- and practice-oriented research (see for example Wodak and de Cillia, 2007). In CDA, this approach is considered abductive, which involves a process of constantly moving back and forth between theory and data (Wodak, 2009).

Aligned with qualitative research methods in cultural analysis, an abductive approach facilitates knowledge generation during data collection, and is specific to that situation and context from which it emerges (Wodak, 2009). This is in contrast to deductive, top down approaches building on theories or set hypotheses (Silverman, 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Any exploration of social phenomena in qualitative research starts with familiarisation with the context, institutions and wider policies; the study and its focus then become refined through the different understandings and insights that emerge (Garfinkel, 1988). The cumulative understanding of a particular context guides the researcher to carry out in-depth face-to-face fieldwork to explore the lived reality of respondents, with a focus on gaining information from individuals. The aim is to create rapport and a relationship with research subjects in their contexts, on the understanding that this leads to richer detailed accounts from respondents (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Critical ethnography provides an interpretive and analytical method in scientific enquiry for the qualitative researcher whose aim is to emphasise critical analysis (Fine, 1994). Originally, sociological and anthropological research spread to the social science disciplines, including social work and education, and contributed to the exploration of language drawn from case studies and in-depth ethnographic interviews and fieldwork (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). These studies have captured more personalised accounts of social work practice and draw on symbolic

interactionism, critical linguistic philosophy, ethnomethodology and anthropology (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, 1995). Research in social work is interdisciplinary because it uses research techniques and research skills which arise from other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology and psychology (Shaw and Gould, 2001). As Dominelli (1997) notes, social work theoreticians draw on systematised eclecticism to develop a theoretical base in order to address the complexities of research and practice. Similar to Bourdieu's understanding of theories as sets of thinking tools used to work with the practical problems of research (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992), this allows researchers to ask what conceptual tools are relevant for this problem and in which context (Weiss and Wodak, 2003). Theory here is understood to provide a set of tools that researchers apply to develop a dialogue between other theories and disciplines to analyse the problem. For social work, this provides the capacity of critical social science theories and concepts to assist in the reinvention of social work practice, education and research (Healy, 2000; McDonald and Jones, 2000). Healy (2000) asserts how critical social work aims to uncover this truth status by proposing new approaches and research. As such, the synthesis drawn upon in this research embraces a range of critical social science theories, because critical social workers have claimed to reveal the 'truth' of social work and on this basis have proposed new practice or research approaches (DeMaria, 1993; Saulnier, 1996; Healy, 2000; Fook, 2012).

This study chose to combine two disciplines (critical ethnography and CDA) and was based on a synthesis of a range of theories which, like CDA, is primarily concerned with exposing the effects of inequality and injustice in the context of social work (Bhatia, Flowerdew, and Jones, 2008). The broader aims of this thesis are to initiate social change in social work cultures, based on a problem-orientated approach to research in social work (van Dijk, 1995; Huckin, 1997). This shows how this study is determined by practical research goals (Habermas 1967; Nietzsche, [1888] 2003), and is concerned with naturalised institutional discourses of policy, gender and labelling in social work cultures. Fairclough (1989) refers to these concerns as 'orders of discourse', which provide a way to explain how naturalisations represent clusters of conventions which embody particular ideologies. In research, the critical

ethnographer takes a clear position in intervening on hegemonic practices, and serves as an advocate in exposing the material effects of these (Thomas, 1993). This reflects the critical turn towards discourse analysis based on an historically grounded comprehensive theory of social change, which sees humanity as an unbroken, historically embedded whole (Marx, 1972). Marx argued that history was not determined by consciousness – consciousness was determined by history; in other words, we do not define history, history defines us. (See chapters four and five for further discussion of these ideas).

Ideological analysis is important in CDA and social work as these analytical tools illustrate how sets of statements in a text<sup>7</sup> point to strategically oriented influences on the productive process (human action). It also considers the semantic (linguistic) rules governing the emergence of a discourse (in social policy for example). This is considered to reinforce and stabilise existing relations or domination of a particular practice. Forming what can be described as a range of normalisations, these ways of speaking can be identified in social work stabilising existing beliefs and practices, such as how current social work is considered to be based on less face-to-face work, or considered as deskilled as a result of bureaucracy. These illuminate the power struggles of the social worker operating in state social work. CDA is considered essential here because this analysis is not merely describing discourse and its content, but considering, accounting for and explaining the features of accounts in social work (Fairclough, 1992). This provides philosophical, linguistic, cognitive, social, cultural and historical dimensions, highlighting how the interface between discourse and knowledge in this research is interdisciplinary (van Dijk, 2011) or in Fairclough's (2003) word 'transdisciplinary'.

Interdisciplinary is not drawn upon in the usual sense of the word, understood as selecting and combining approaches (or practitioners), but is an approach that assumes disciplinary boundaries represent institutional consequences of historical power struggles of the political and economic forces in which such interests are

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<sup>7</sup> In semiotics (which is broadly understood as the social interpretation of language and meaning) the concept of text with particular reference to text-in-situation is regarded as an account, speech act, speech event, exchange, episode or narrative (Halliday 1992).

embedded (Graham, 2003 in Weiss and Wodak, 2003). This thesis precisely rejects scientific claims to truth, or of the authority of any one meta-narrative, and so liberates researchers and educators from the rigidity of disciplinary regimes (Feyerabend, 1975). Feyerabend (1995) argues against imperialist approaches to scientific knowledge and methodology, and this thesis cannot be confined to one discipline only as societies, people and discourses are complex and constantly changing. Hence this thesis draws from interpretive critical theories using critical realist philosophies.

Chiapello and Fairclough (2002) termed transdisciplinarity as a type of CDA that understands that 'theories, methodologies, disciplines, paradigms and traditions can be enhanced and developed through dialogue with others in interdisciplinary research' (p.186). This is where 'two disciplines or frameworks may lead to a development of both, through a process of each internally appropriating the logic of the other as a resource for its own development' (Chiapello and Fairclough, 2002, p.186). According to Weiss and Wodak (2003), CDA is a theoretical synthesis of conceptual tools and provides opportunities for 'innovative and productive theory formation' (p.9). Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) assert how these approaches synthesise different theoretical positions and cannot be separated from method. The disciplines/theories in CDA that are contained in its dialogue are informed through that dialogue. This is a matter of working with the logic and categories of the other in developing one's own theory and methodology (Fairclough, 2001). This form of enquiry engages in dialogue with a range of theoretical perspectives within critical theories, so that each theoretical assumption and explanation of these discourses is a matter of dialogue between other theories and explanations.

Whilst there is a perceived anxiety about interdisciplinary research (Huggan, 2002), in 2008 the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) asserted that a change in breadth, depth and quality of the UK research base in social work and social care was needed, pointing out how there must be 'a strong commitment to innovative, interdisciplinary approaches to research' (ESRC, 2008, p.1). As many levels of contexts are involved in social work, including educational, historical, cultural, professional and personal ones, the interdisciplinary rationale in this research

assumes that both experiences and realities derived from accounts of social work represent a multitude of historical, cultural and socio-political domains. Indexicality, a term used in anthropology to illuminate power and language and how modes of linguistic practices (re)produce social relations (Silverstein, 2003; Inoue, 2004; Slembrouck, 2004), shows us how all narratives and accounts are situated in social, cultural and political contexts (Roscoe *et al.*, 2011). The connections between CDA as a method for this study and its relationship to constructed and reconstituted narratives surrounding the identity of social work are made in this research by drawing on the concept of intertextuality.

Intertextuality is a form of critical deconstruction in which, instead of viewing a narrative as a story or account solely upon its own and in isolation, the text (narrative) is theorised as a network of fragments of other texts. Texts include historical documents, written documents, transcripts (spoken conversations) and interviews (Fairclough, 1992). Each particular practice associated with these narrative texts links to practices within and across disciplines/institutions, and will have associated intertextual chains related to each other (Fairclough, 1992). This provides an analysis of the presence within text elements of other texts/narratives, primarily those related to viewing social work from a particular standpoint (see section 3.8 for further discussion).

The literature review started a textual analysis and focused on the dominant narratives and language surrounding the social construction of the social work identity. It analysed social work's historical and ideological contexts during different periods in time. This demonstrated wider texts (discourses and narratives) ascribed to the social work identity/role, drawn from historical and economic structures. As part of CDA, the accounts of social work are analysed alongside wider narratives drawn from historical, ideological and cultural origins. Consistent with critical theory, narrative enquiry in the 20th century has realist, postmodernist and constructionist origins (Riessman and Quinney, 2005). Whilst the likes of Widdowson (1998) and Pennycook (2001) support notions of imperialism, where there is a perceived danger of competing and uncontrolled methodologies drawn on in a scatter of different models in the social sciences (Breeze 2011), Chouliaraki

and Fairclough (1999) advocate 'theoretical diversity, suggesting that researchers should be open to a wide range of theory, allowing CDA to mediate interdisciplinary dialogue between social theories and methods' (Fairclough, 2000, p.163).

CDA interrelates critical theories in their social analysis of discourse, which differ in theory or methodology depending on the type of research (Pêcheux, 1982; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997b; Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Fairclough's (1992) CDA draws on concepts of Gramsci, Marx and Foucault, setting the stage for systematic and detailed textual analysis. Here, Fairclough, (2001) and Luke (2002) view discourse as a material form of social practice or action, providing opportunities to consider 'the relationships between discourse and society, between text and context, and between language and power' (cited in Henderson, 2005, p. 2) According to Fairclough (1992) traditional approaches in linguistics such as conversational analysis can avoid general theory such as power and ideology. Such approaches have only focused on a micro-analysis of power. Power needs to be extended to wider social factors, such as whether participants have equal rights or access to some discourses more than others. Power can generally be understood here as influencing both productive and interpretivist options to agents (Fairclough, 1992).

## 2.8 Fairclough's (1992) Three Dimensional Analysis of Discourse



Figure 2: Fairclough's (1992) Three Dimensional Analysis of Discourse (Source: Jones, M. 2003 p. 46).

Fairclough (1992) adopts a three dimensional analysis of the socially constructive effects of discourse which provides a useful discourse analytic tool. He refers to his model as providing a step-by-step approach, calling it a guide, not a blueprint. CDA approaches vary depending upon the object of the study, but all CDA entails detailed textual analysis during the first phase before aligning the detailed (micro) analysis to the interrelationship with discursive and social practices (Fairclough, 2005). How data is selected and collected depends on the project and the particular nature of the linguistic analysis. This can include narratives (text structure) or transitivity (grammar, which shows who is doing what to whom in the text). This theoretical approach is multidimensional, encompassing three dimensions of analysis, and starts with the micro-analysis of seven dimensions of textual analysis in stage one.

## **2.9 Textual Analysis**

In Fairclough's (1989) textual analysis, discourse is concerned with social semiotics which relates to the social interpretation of language and meanings. The study of semiotics analyses categories of language such as individual words, pronouns and grammar, as well as analysing how metaphors/rhetoric are deployed by social actors. Combined with theories of social science (symbolic interactionism/social constructionism, post-structuralism, critical linguistics and critical theory), this textual dimension extends its analysis to the narrative (as text structures). These, amongst other dimensions of analysis (including constitution and intertextuality), are the categories underpinning Fairclough's (1992) stage one textual analysis and have been adopted in this study. Constitution is concerned with how accounts are coherent with wider ideologies, and intertextuality with the analysis of history and the voices of others in the text. Each dimension is discussed fully in section 3.1.

At what is considered as the micro-level analysis, Fairclough's dimensions explore how language choice contains both implicit and indirect meanings within texts (discourse). These meanings are often alluded to or explicitly expressed in the process of using a word. Words here are understood to signify a range of

concepts/ideas, and are underpinned by theories which analyse the concept of the sign or form in the study of linguistics.

A sign (which is understood as a word that expresses a concept it represents) is composed by the signifier (the narrator) and the signified (the form which the sign takes/choice of words). To illustrate this point, an array of signs (concepts) presented by a historian (signifier) arises from the sign maker's (historian's) interest (embedded in social and personal contexts) (Kress and Hodge, 1979). The political context, their own social/historical formation, the assessment of the audience, their theoretical stance and their commitment to communicate a given topic arises from their interest in the discipline (subject area). At the moment the historian chooses the sign (concepts) they attempt to find the form (structure, style, choice of words) which is best suited to its meaning (key phrases) (Kress and Hodge, 1979).

In essence, the central concern of semiotics is the study of language which understands that language is the primary model of a signifying system. This social rule-governed system (structures and rules of language) are the signifying system that creates the social world as opposed to simply expressing it. Originating from de Saussure, signs (words as the concept they represent) are analysed against longer stretches of text and consist of a meaning combined with a form (Saussure, 1966). This structuralist tradition within linguistics became a popular mode of intellectual inquiry and Saussure's (1966) work proposed a distinction between *langue* (social side of language which is considered outside of the individual, based on the structure of language) and *parole* (individual speech acts which conform to the underlying system (rules) of language) (Sarangi and Coulthard, 2000). Studying the structure of *langue*, Saussure argued that both the signifier and the signified (the concept it represents) are interrelated to both psychological and social dimensions (constructs/social systems).

CDA extends Saussurian (1966) linguistics, a tradition which assumed that the use of signs (words) was fixed and unchangeable. Whilst Saussure had assumed the meaning attached to words is not inherent in them, but a result of social conventions/interactions whereby we connect certain words, sounds and meanings



together, the post-structuralist critique of the stable and perceived unchangeable nature of *langue* considered this as problematic. This is because the meanings of signs can change and shift in relation to one another (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). Signs (words) gain meaning in relation to being different from other signs. These vary and change according to specific contexts and the way in which they are used (Laclau, 1993).

Laclau, 1993). Underpinned by Derrida's work which pointed out the failures and limits of structuralist linguistics in representing the world, this social view of language outlined how sign makers (writers, historians, politicians) can transform cultural and linguistic resources available to them within their social environment. This strand of post-structuralist thought analyses discourses as an abstract phenomenon (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002).

For example, CDA in the micro-analysis of words and through the deployment of critical linguistics theories extends the concept of sign in identifying how these have political and ideological significance. Pêcheux, Henry, Poitou and Haroche (1979) argued how language (signs) in the dominant social order are crucial material forms of ideology as subjects are understood as ideologically interpellated by discourses. This is because interpellation produces subjects in such a way that individuals recognise their own existence in terms of the dominant ideology of the society in which they live. As a result, social workers will construct themselves (personal identity) in terms of a pre-existing ideology that puts them in their place. An example of this would be attributes a social actor might ascribe to their personal identity, such as a caring person, and subsequently how they might align these with characteristics to the social identity of social work.

Ideology, then, in Althusserian terms is argued to consist of a subject's imaginary relationship with the real conditions of their existence. This understanding views it as not so much true or false, but as conditions of a social existence representing the heart of a given culture. Ideological power is given greater significance than material power here because it always exists in an apparatus and its practice

(Althusser, 1971). So saturating is ideology in its constitution of subjects, it forms reality and thus appears to individuals as true or obvious (Althusser, 1971).

This is important in the context of critical social work as it acknowledges that discourses represent political interests. It recognises how powerful discourses in a society have institutional bases, understood as part of the ideological apparatus which legitimates the social order of the time (Pease and Fook, 1999). Althusser's (1989) ideological state apparatus allows for critical social work to understand the method by which organisations propagate ideology. What this means is that consciousness and agency are experienced, but are the products of ideology 'speaking through' the subject. Suffice to note, the organisations in which social workers are a part of serve to transmit the values of the state (Althusser, 1989).

Underpinning the work of Pêcheux and drawn from Althusser's understanding of ideology, discourses are inscribed into social practices and expressed in objective form (action) (Thompson, 1984). Some take the view that all discourses are ideological and thus viewed as a practice (see for example, Gee, 1999; Hodge and Kress, 1992). What this means is that discourse is viewed as saturating its subjects, and it informs Pêcheux's (1984) investigation of the subject-effect of language. A given ideological formation from a given position in society determines what can, and should/should not be said. Individuals are understood as interpellated by discourse as speaking-subjects (as subjects of their discourse) and drawn from cultural/discursive practices. These practices, represented in language, can be aligned to the ideological formations that correspond to them (Lemke, 1995).

This analysis closed the gap in understanding ideological effects of the sign (discourse), arguing that any analysis of language must be directed to the systematic nature of *langue* and towards discursive (cultural) processes in discourse/texts. To illustrate this point, the dominant ideology of neo-liberalism and managerialism is the production and sustenance of the rational-technical approach to social work, which systematically distorts the communicative capacity of social workers (Guba, 1990). Under the influence of this ideology, all aspects of social practices and social work have undergone a process of reification, so that we no

longer recognise the distortions of or impact on the communicative action of social workers. Whilst the accounts of social work sound highly plausible given the context in which they operate, this has implications for social work practice because discursive practices pre-exist the individual, and thus subjectivities may be constrained by the available discourses about what constitutes social work practice. It is important to note, however, that social workers may actively make use of discursive practices to assist them in maintaining a specific reality about contemporary practice, and thus meet specific objectives in particular contexts. The presupposition of dialectics is that the sense of things is not obtained by their individuality, rather, from their totality (Kosik, 1969). As nothing can be understood in isolation, the discourses of social workers need to be considered in their whole context constrained by social structures and governing ideologies (welfare state) – but how, paradoxically, social workers contribute to their reinforcement.

To conclude the textual analysis of Fairclough's stage one analysis, these critical linguistic theories underpin the seven dimensions and include Pêcheux's materialist theory of discourse which draws on a structural Marxist critique of the dominant forms of contemporary linguistics. This outlined the interrelationship between language and society. Kress and Hodge (1979) and Fowler (1991) built upon Pêcheux's (1982) work, asserting that language use and its meanings are inextricably linked to the function of social structure and power (Lemke, 1995). This is because words do not exist in themselves or are not benign but are influenced by ideological forces embedded in socio-historical processes in which they are produced (Fairclough, 2003; Machin and Mayr, 2012).

Applying this micro-analysis (based on the seven dimensions of textual analysis) alongside post-structuralist critical linguistics is useful for social work in the context of anti-discriminatory practice (ADP). This is because ADP primarily involves the social actor (as social worker) identifying what is referred to as the psychological level in the context of practice (Thompson, 2001; Fook, 2012). The social worker is encouraged to analyse how discrimination manifests itself at the psychological level, which includes unpacking how the language that individuals draw on is inextricably linked to primary (immediate family groups) and secondary (wider

social groups such as education) (Thompson, 2001). To understand how these affect practice (in the context of cognitive processes – prejudices or assumptions), social workers are encouraged to be reflexive as to how their own values, beliefs and language can manifest themselves in forms of discrimination or oppression (Dalrymple and Burke, 1995; Thompson, 2001; Fook, 2012). CDA's textual analysis and its adoption of the concept of sign provide a useful way to analyse language use in social work. More importantly, this provides the practitioner with ways to identify how language use is reinforced by the wider cultural world in which they are situated. In essence, CDA provides critical social work with additional tools with which to embrace anti-discriminatory/oppressive concepts and identify how this relates to personal and social ideologies. It provides methods to critically deconstruct the language of the profession in dialectical ways. This links to the second dimension of analysing discourses in Fairclough's CDA model (see figure 2).

## **2.10 Discursive Practices (Styles and Genres)**

The post-structuralist strand of critical linguistics embraces the work of Foucault (1978), particularly in the representation of knowledge and truth in discourse analysis, which transformed the previously ahistorical theories in linguistics. In essence, these theories challenged previous ideas which appeared unconcerned with the influence or analysis of history and language. In contrast to traditional linguistic analysis, concerned with structure of language (*langue*), discourses are understood within this tradition to communicate a given knowledge at a given time, providing a language for talking about a particular topic. Foucault (1978) referred to this as a state of knowledge or *epistémè*. Foucault claimed that dominant discourses were related to the production and reproduction of knowledge through language. These influence individual action and conduct, and so are understood within discourse analysis as discursive practices (Foucault, 1978; Fairclough, 1992). Foucault 1978).

In Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model, the study of social semiotics is extended to wider collective ways of speaking/practising (discursive practices). Or, in other words, the texts (accounts) are extended to a cultural level (in Bhaskar's (1989)

terms, the actual domain). This analyses discourse (ways of representing/ talking) in the context of genres (ways of acting) and styles (ways of being – personal and social identities). Here, how discourses are articulated together, consumed, distributed and reproduced in discursive (cultural) practices is analysed.

Genres are difficult to define, but are understood by Fairclough (2003) as consisting of the diverse ways of (inter-)acting and of producing social life in culture. For example in meetings/practices of various types of organisation, people behave in particular ways according to custom, norms and the normalising gaze of others (societal expectations) (Foucault, 1972). To all intents and purposes, genres are understood in CDA as a way of acting in discourse, and an example of this would be the casework account in social work (see literature review). All genres can be understood as a means of disseminating similar discourses and ideologies (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

Genres, discourses and styles (personal and social identities) can be distinguished and related to different levels of social practices. Some of these can be linked to relatively local activities, whilst other genres can have the presence of other discourses and voices (intertextuality). This brings context into the analysis of accounts, as all genres associated with the construction of social work are likely to lead to a series of (inter-)actions corresponding with the construction. Such genres reveal the subject positions within the text, and show how these are constrained by discursive practices in the identification of struggles of truth about what constitutes social work (Kress and Hodge, 1979). Consequently, in every discursive practice, in the use of and redistribution of texts, different types of discourses are reconstituted in particular ways (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002). Understood as analysing signs which are seen as socially motivated, this second dimension of analysis highlights how ways of representing are articulated together, and provides the cultural analysis (and actual domain) of the dimensions of discourse in CDA. This enables this research to engage in a dialogue with theories aligned with an interpretivist cultural analysis, showing how these genres and styles are inextricably linked to wider social narratives/ discourses available in social work cultures. In essence,

these are interrelated to discourses drawn from historical and ideological contexts of social work (intertextuality).

This is because statements that are continuously proposed about a subject (available in a culture and beyond) and their associated knowledge are viewed as hegemonic in CDA (Gramsci, 1971; Fairclough, 1992; Weiss and Wodak, 2003). One example is the notion of 'problem families' which is the well-established Westernised discourse for families in poverty in the UK (Cohen, in Bailey and Blake, 1975). Reflecting social policy initiatives that draw on key rhetorical signs dominant within the epistémè of a given time, these ways of constructing families inevitably influence culture. To illustrate this point succinctly, 'Integrated Family Support Teams' in Wales (Welsh Assembly Government, 2002) are based on government signs such as problem families and substance misusers. These policies reflect key rhetorical strategies in the endeavour to control the social evils of the day. This shows how in CDA, the meaning of discourse is understood as deriving from outside the text (Kress, 1989). This is because texts are viewed as made up of past discursive practices, condensed into conventions and endowed with meaning potential (Kress, 1989).

Discursive practices contribute to the creation and recreation of unequal power relations between social groups through sustaining specific regimes of truth (Foucault, 1978). Viewed as part of social activity/process (action and interaction), this is understood as semiosis in Fairclough's CDA. This is because meaning making is understood as a facet of social processes where any discourses are viewed as dialectically related and a part of that reality (Fairclough, 1992). In this action and interaction, language is considered to be drawn upon in particular ways interrelated with social representation (as social actor). Influencing how the person represents themselves in any given field or organisation, this again can be aligned with anti-discriminatory practice in social work theory.

Anti-discriminatory/oppressive practice (ADP) in social work encourages social actors to analyse their wider cultural context. This is achieved by extending the analysis from the psychological to the cultural level, which encourages practitioners

to be aware of their language use and assumptions and how these influence practice (Dalrymple and Burke, 1995; Thompson, 2001; Fook, 2012). The practitioner analyses where concepts and ideas derive from in culture by analysing how cognitive processes such as stereotyping are formed and manifest themselves in various contexts. These powerful ways in which the media portray individuals through labelling processes stemming from wider dominant cultural practices are examples of how knowledge formations are derived at by the social actor. Here, the social worker is encouraged to analyse self-and inter-action in the context of practice, and how one might discriminate as a result of cultural socialisation or taken for granted ideas (discourses). These taken for granted ideas often reflect a range of other discursive (cultural) practices as well as personal practices in the course of everyday activity. The power of discursive practices can be understood as the ideological effects of discourse in CDA, aligned with powerful structures and social practices at any given time in a society (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002).

### **2.11 Social Practices (Historical and Ideological)**

The third dimension of analysis in CDA relates to how discourses contribute to the construction of systems of knowledge and beliefs through social practices (see figure 2). ADP extends the cultural analysis to a structural one which encourages the practitioner to understand how language and cultural ways of behaving/practices stem from wider powerful structures of society (government, religion and health) (Dalrymple and Burke, 1995; Healy, 2000; Thompson, 2001; Fook, 2012). Knowledge formations that underpin social values and morals in any given society are understood to derive from these institutions (structures). This shows how CDA, in its extension of analysing discourses at the discursive and structural levels, can aid the critical social worker to contextualise language in social work within the ideological state apparatus. These social and historical practices in CDA are understood to include discourse/language, power, social relations, material practices, institutions/rituals and beliefs/values/desires (Fairclough, 1992).

One aspect of how discourses are drawn upon in Fairclough's (1992) model is the recognition of a type of ordering. What this means is that there is dominance of

some discourses over others, i.e. some are mainstream in a particular order of discourse and society. Others can be marginal or oppositional or alternative (Fairclough, 1995b). These are referred to in CDA as 'orders of discourse', described as a particular social ordering of relationships in the different ways of making meaning through semiosis (interaction).

To illustrate this point further, the notion of social work as a deskilled profession can be argued to be the dominant order of contemporary adult social work, and demonstrates how the wider ideological context of social work interpellates the subject who subsequently constructs and (inter-) acts on that basis (Jones, 2001; Postle 2001, 2002; Carey 2008a, 2012). As such, discourse in CDA can be understood as a form of power, formation of beliefs/values/desires, an institution, a way of socially relating, or in other words a material practice (Fairclough, 1992). Seen as absent from non-critical linguistic approaches, discursive practices are understood as material practices linked to hegemony and power through the dissemination of ideology (Lemke, 1995). In the context of structures and critical social work, these traditions analyse how discourses can influence the reproduction and transformation of social structures (institutions). As such the ordering of discourses and its relationship to power and ideology is an essential component of CDA and for critical social work. This is because discourses represent aspects of the social world which in turn contribute to and maintain social relations of power (Fairclough, 2003). Power relations that operate within discourses are complex and enmeshed with power (Hall, 2006), and as Lemke (1995) points out its social effects are multiplied by our hopes and fears, our beliefs, expectations, and our sensitivities and values.

To summarise, all three dimensions (text, discursive and social) coexist and interact in all discourses. What this means is that discourse is understood as interrelated with larger socially conditioned textual production, interpretation and reproduction (cultural/discursive) alongside social practices (orders of discourse). This three dimensional analysis (text, discursive practice and social practices) allows this research to unpack the communicative action of student and qualified social



workers. In exploring the accounts of social workers utilising CDA, this model is aligned to the research objectives (illustrated below).

## 2.12 Application: The Three Dimensional Analysis to Social Work Discourses

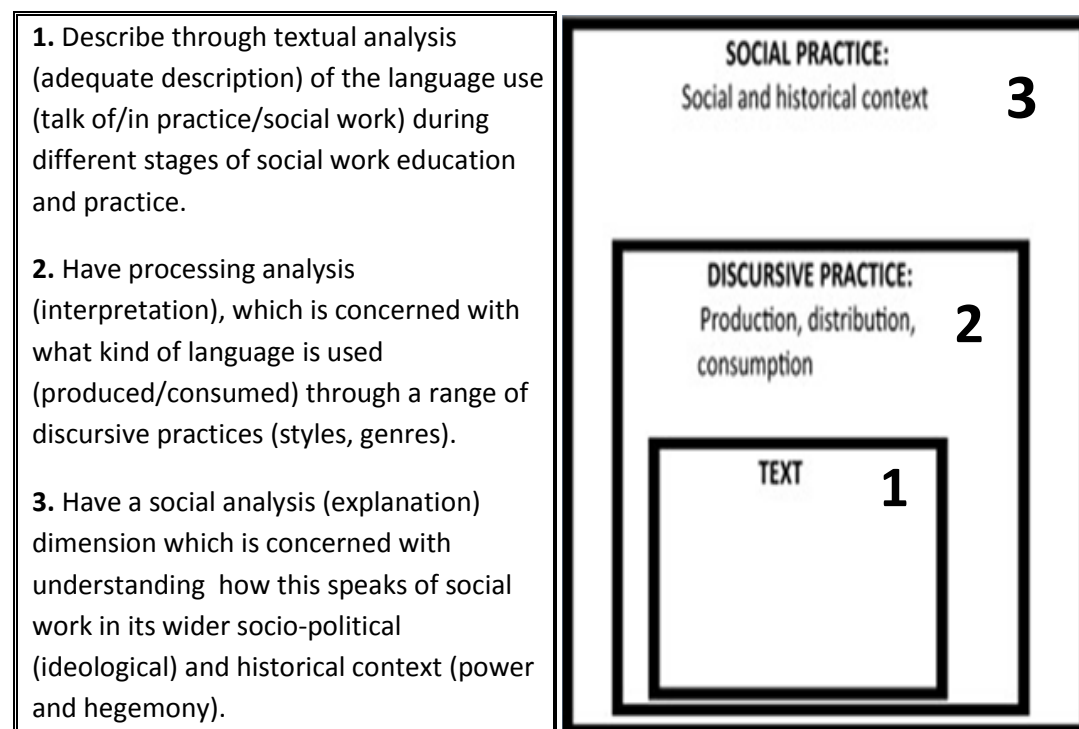


Figure 3: Application of the three dimensional analysis to social work discourses

## 2.13 Theoretical Triangulation

Whilst Widdowson (1995, 1996, 1998) criticises the validity of CDA by arguing that the beliefs of analysts are considered ideologically biased, resulting in analysts reading meaning into rather than out of texts, triangulation in CDA is theoretical. Weiss and Wodak's (2003) recommendation for validity in discourse analytic studies state that discourses must be analysed in four ways. The following table outlines how this research and chosen CDA model encompass theoretical triangulation.

## 2.14 Table 2: Theoretical Triangulation

1	<b>The immediate language/text</b>	The accounts of social workers and how these represent a range of ideas – textual analysis through critical linguistic, symbolic interactionism and social constructionist theories.
2	<b>The intertextual relationship</b>	How the accounts of social workers relate to the historical (narratives) and ideological contexts of social work. Theories aligned with history, society and discourse (intertextuality).
3	<b>The extra-linguistic (social) level</b>	The cultural and social context of the social worker – theories aligned with social constructionism, post-structuralism (discursive practices – genres, ways of being) and how these relate to wider social practices.
4	<b>The broader socio-political context</b>	Dialectical theories (meta-theories) aligned with hegemony, power and ideology (analysis of orders of discourse in social work).

(Adapted from Weiss and Wodak, 2003).

Permanent switching between these levels and evaluating the findings from different theoretical perspectives is argued to minimise the risk of being biased in CDA (Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

## 2.15 Ontological Choices: Critical Realism and Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourses of social work are a part of reality, but reality is **not** considered as solely reducible to discourses and discourse is not reducible to structure only. What this means is that critical realism supports a transformational model of social activity based on the relationship between human agency and structure (Archer, Bhaskar, Collier, Lawson and Norrie, 1998). This is because society is understood as a present condition (form of reality) that continually reproduces human agency and actions. This includes the actors' conscious and unconscious reproduction of the conditions (ideology) of a given society (Bhaskar, 1989). Embracing agency, structure and change (Houston, 2010), social workers here are positioned as construing and constructing society in a constant iterative process (Archer *et al.*, 1998). 'Since

individuals are conscious agents, they are able to re-interpret their situation and consider new forms of action' (King, 2004, p.71). This is because critical realists are critical of theorists who reduce social life solely to the effects of structure and who ignore the possibility of a construing agent, that is, of human agency (Archer *et al.*, 1998). As Sims-Schouten, Riley and Willing (2007) point out, 'whilst the ways in which people can understand themselves are structured both by the available discourses in their social milieu and the material conditions in which they find themselves, these contexts offer a range of possible ways of being' (p.107).

Critical realism in social work research identifies that any reality is derived through language, meaning making and the social context (Oliver, 2011), but this ontology provides a dual focus on agency and structure in a cause and effect way which has been identified as a key feature of critical social work (Dominelli, 1997; Houston, 2010). Whilst this research emphasises the role of human agency in constituting the social world, it does not underestimate the power and role of discourses originating from social structures in shaping experience and the subject (Mead, 1962; Giddens, 1984; Fairclough, 1992; Archer, 2000).

In analysing context-specific accounts of practitioners, and integrating one's own experiential knowledge of social work discourses (to address the concerns of pre-determined, constructed and reconstituted ways of speaking), this research explores discourse in three ways: through experiences (concepts and ideas drawn from interpretation), through interaction (discursive practices), and through their interrelationship with wider institutional/structural discourses (as social practices). The social practice dimension of discourse attends to concerns in the social analysis of institutional and organisational circumstances that influence discourse production and reproduction such as social policies. This form of logic when applied to this research explores the whole context/reality of accounts of social work, providing a new synthesis of how social work discourses can be analysed in dialectical ways. Although taking a social constructionist approach in stage one of Fairclough's (1992) CDA textual analyses, this research has a practical interest and implications for the real world. Given the subject of this enquiry, this study cannot afford to avoid talking about real things (Costain Schou and Hewison, 1998).

Critical realism includes strands of positivism in the form of scientific laws (mainly naturalism) and principles, as well as strands of social constructionist epistemology (epistemic relativism). Naturalist ontology seeks to get behind phenomena in order to discover essential connections, relationships and causes/patterns in society (Bhaskar, 1989; Houston, 2001). This ontological distinction was made by Bhaskar (1978): that is, the difference between 'scientific laws found in logical positivism and patterns of events' in society' (p.12). These philosophical endeavours draw on transcendental arguments which highlight what must be true for X to be possible (cause and effect). This tradition prioritises the ontological question as the starting point for a philosophy of reality, not the epistemological question of how knowledge is possible (Bhaskar, 1978). Critical realists focus their research enquiry on the relationship between the real world and the concepts we form of it. Oliver (2011) points out how critical realism marries the concern with a reality external to consciousness, whilst asserting that all meaning made of that reality is context-dependent and socially constructed. It is an important philosophy for the social worker who must weigh up meaning making with evidence to test that meaning making in conjunction to external reality (Houston, 2001).

Houston (2001, 2010) argues how critical realism illustrates the importance of understanding and explaining anti-oppressive interventions. Keen to promote consciousness raising, Mullender and Ward (1991) pinpoint how this is a key strategy for tackling oppressive practices within social work. Moreover, on an educational level, for social workers who frame and (re)frame their analysis of their own language, critical realism provides a platform for critical thinking (Houston, 2001).

Despite social constructionism's claims of being able to link a range of theories, within this epistemology powerful societal structures are understood as socially manufactured through human interaction (Houston, 2001; Oliver, 2011). This assumes there are no social structures that pre-date human existence, but are a product of human interaction (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). In contrast, critical realism calls these structures/mechanisms 'intransitive objects of knowledge', understood as independent of human knowledge and perception (Bhaskar, 1989).

Given *a priori*<sup>8</sup> status in this ontology, structures are assumed to be generalised but fallible features of experience and knowledge. *A priori* reflects the status of knowledge of truth (or falsehood) and means ‘from what comes before’. Here, *a priori* status in the context of social structures indicates that they are considered to ‘come before’ individual human experience, reflecting their status as real within this ontology.

In *The Possibility of Naturalism* Bhaskar (1989) argued that whilst society and people are inextricably linked, these two concepts need to be explored from different ontological and epistemological assumptions. He argues that social structures within society pre-exist and are independent of people’s actions. Society is thus understood to have three dimensions, consisting of structures of society (in the real domain), and the experiences (in the empirical domain) and the interaction (in the actual domain) of individuals. Whilst Giddens’ (1984) structuration theory is a useful starting point to understanding how structures are produced and reproduced through interaction, societal structures were not given *a priori* status in his theory.

Layder (1998) highlights how social structures have emergent features (power) which exists independently of human agency, but only comes into operation in the interaction with other social factors and human action. Emergent features here are identified in the way of social structures and how these have tendencies to impact upon social works reality in specific ways. Their impact ultimately depends upon the reaction and interaction of the social world to shape their potential power (Layder, 1998). For example, new laws or policy rely upon the compliance of individuals to shape societal norms and practices within a given society; if the social world refuses to act upon these, either new laws or policies are required, or punishment is enacted. Bhaskar (1989) assumes how we experience and understand the world must be considered within the context of social structures which have emergent features (powers) and interrelationships. Understood as ‘intransitive objects of

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<sup>8</sup> A priori/a posteriori is applied to concepts, propositions, knowledge and truth to differentiate how knowledge is acquired or understood within epistemology and ontology (Harrison-Barbet, 2001).

knowledge', this points out how social structures are real because we act on the theories of the world we make reference to. In this domain, there are powers and mechanisms that are understood to generate real events and influence society.

Putting forward a tripartite model for understanding reality, Bhaskar (1989) asserted that any social phenomena needed to be understood in three ways:

- The empirical domain (experience), understood as the experienced events drawn from social interaction.
- The actual domain (interaction and practice within discursive practices), understood as events that exist whether experienced or not (e.g. lightning, or specific events).
- The real domain consisting of intransitive objects of knowledge (social structures) that have emergent features (powers) to generate events.

In social work, emergent features which generate events in the real domain are the social structures or intransitive objects of knowledge (drawn from the welfare state) which influence the material practices (action) of social workers. This real domain constitutes powerful social structures/institutions that pre-exist the interactions and experiences of social workers. Inevitably these will influence the constructions, actions and social work practice/identity/role. Given *a priori* status, discourses aligned with state social work pre-exist the social actor prior to socialisation, and these historical and ideological constructions have emergent features (power/force) to influence the productive power of the agent. In essence, it influences discursive practices, constitution of self and the professional self. This perspective enables us to identify that self and subjectivity in social work are altered by deliberately engineered environments that constrain each person's construction of self (Foucault, 1972; Archer, 2000; Ward and Marshall, 2007). The real domain then provides an analytical framework in which to distinguish emergent features (powers) of societal structures from which discourses originate, by looking at these in cause and effect ways in the actual domain.

In the actual domain, the interactive reality of social work is viewed in a dialectical way: how structures of society can have a cause/effect specific to events/incidents that occur within social work cultures. In Bhaskar's (1975) model of reality, the actual domain refers to events resulting from the emergent features of the real. The actual refers to what happens when these powers or emergent features are activated and result in human action or change, hence dialectical: for example serious case reviews or bad practices that result in a range of discursive practices and changes of the social work education curriculum, and policy and procedures in social work. Discourses here are understood as manifested in social processes and interaction, and (re)constitute social processes (Wodak and Ludwig, 1999).

In the empirical domain, the experiences of social workers are mediated by individual perceptions, observations and constructions of these actual events (drawn from interaction and discursive practices). This is because the empiricist world corresponds with our everyday understanding, how we attain knowledge and how we claim to know what we know (Denemark *et al.*, 1997). The empiricists argue that all data arises from observation, but the connection with any concept (schema) or theory (construction) outlines how data is always mediated by our theoretical constructions. For this reason, Bhaskar (1978) referred to empiricism as 'epistemic fallacy' (p.38). Facts in the empirical domain (such as social work being 'deskilled') are theory dependent, but not theory determined. This is because when we draw on the language of society, we enter the linguistic world of meaning and the already interpreted world (Denemark *et al.*, 1997). Any knowledge of social reality here is assumed to be fallible as well as open to interpretation and adjustment. The material world is not simply received but perceived and, according to Fairclough (1992), perception is fallible, context and culture dependent.

The following diagram applies the tripartite understanding of reality in the context of social work discourses and the three domains discussed above. It is worth noting how figure 2 directly correlates with table 2, showing a dialectical analysis of social work discourses and the critical realist ontology underpinning Fairclough's (1992) model. In addition, it also shows a direct relationship to anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive theory in social work.



## 2.16 A Critical Realist Understanding of Social Work Discourses

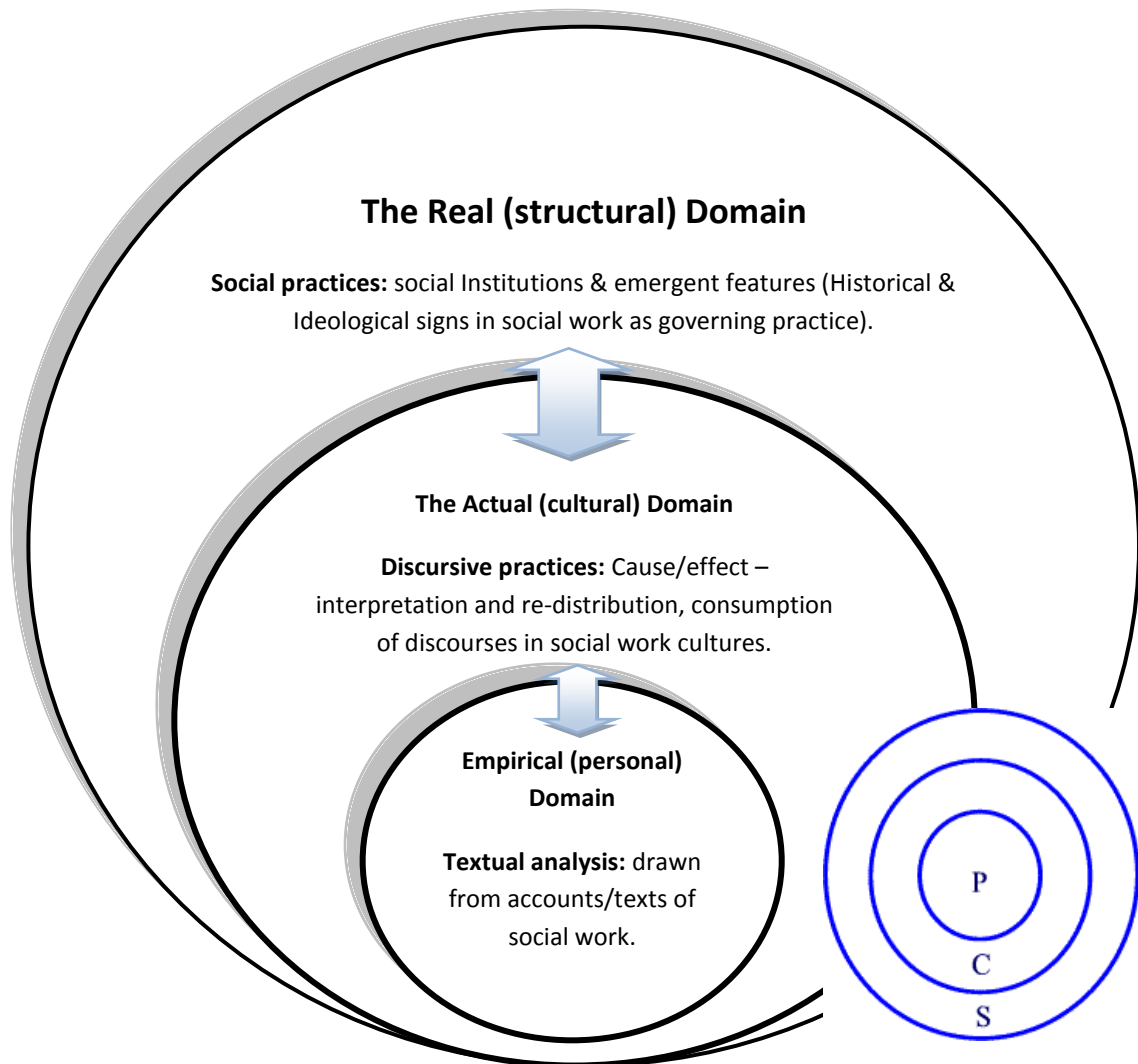


Figure 3: A critical realist understanding of social work discourses.

This diagram represents my own pictorial interpretation of a critical realist understanding of social work discourses, and shows its consistency with Thompson's (2001) PCS (personal, cultural and structural) model. Concerned primarily with the historical, cultural and ideological context of the accounts of social work, this research draws on an interdisciplinary framework in which to analyse discourses. This research is guided by theories drawn from the traditions of critical theory and critical social work, and combines philosophical, linguistic, cognitive, social, cultural, historical and political ideas. This provides the theoretical and analytical framework in which to consider the dialectical interrelationship of

how real social structures (institutions) and their emergent features impact upon the personal and professional self. As Bhaskar (1979) points out 'people, in their conscious activity, for the most part unconsciously reproduce (and occasionally transform) the structures governing their substantive activities of production' (p.44). 'Social workers in their accounts of practice need to recognise the material conditions (social structures) that give rise to constructions that people draw upon, and the role of human agency in challenging these discourses' (Roscoe and Madoc-Jones, 2009, p.6). This research moves beyond phenomenology and social constructionism by exploring social practices (cultures and institutions) which underpin individual action and understanding. This is because 'no human activity can exist outside the medium of social structures' (Joseph 2002, p.9). CDA in this context focuses on exposing ideas, norms and behaviours which produce normalisations of social work. These are understood here to represent reconstituted discursive practices and power structures (social practices). "As social workers, we can challenge discourses in the endeavour to (re) construct and create alternative discourses in the context of practice" (Roscoe and Madoc-Jones, 2009, p.6).

## **Chapter 2, Part 2: Ethics and Methods of Data Collection**

### **2.17 Ethics**

According to Peled and Leichtentritt (2002), qualitative research cannot be a good study in social work unless rigorous ethical standards have been maintained. As ethics is the study of what is proper and improper behaviour, encompassing notions of moral duty and obligation, social work research with either service users, practitioners or students requires a duty to act in a way that is consistent with their values (Taylor and White, 2000; Peled and Leichtentritt, 2002). This includes respecting the rights of respondents to confidentiality and anonymity when agreeing to participate, alongside providing sufficient and transparent information on the purpose and benefits of the research (Robson, 2002). For example, full disclosure of relevant information should be made to participants, and the decision to participate must be completely voluntary where researchers must obtain documented informed consent from participants (Robson, 2002). In the context of anti-oppressive research in social work (whoever the participants are), this requires consideration of the power involved in carrying out research enquires. This is essential given the codes and ethics of social work practice (Hardwick and Worsley, 2011; McLaughlin, 2012). As noted in section 1.4, a participatory approach was adopted in this study, where respondents were seen as active collaborators in the endeavour to understand the language of contemporary social work.

The MPhil/PhD study was granted approval by the Glyndŵr University Research Ethics Committee (GREC) in Nov 2010. This was the recognised governance framework which regulated this research and quality assured the proposal. The approved GRECb form included all data collection tools including: consent forms; information sheets; letters to students and practitioners; and semi-structured aide memoirs in the form of topic guides. This study was transferred to the University of Chester, and was approved as an 'advanced status' study in January 2013 and permission was granted to proceed.

A central part of research ethics and research codes is the need for written informed consent (Oliver, 2003; Lewis, 2006; McLaughlin, 2012). The 'opt in'

method was given in the consent form and this identified that any participation was voluntary (see appendix A). According to McLaughlin (2012), this is particularly important in the context of people who have a professional relationship with the research participants. This is because students in this context could have felt obliged to participate due to my identity as a senior lecturer on the BA Honours in Social Work. Fear of saying something wrong in the context of their studies was also a consideration, and so it was also clearly outlined how this was unrelated to their studies and performance as a student social worker.

The information sheets provided participants with the aim and objectives/purpose of the study, alongside what was meant by participation, the request for permission to digitally record, what kinds of subjects were likely to be covered, and finally how participants could find out about the study when completed (see appendix B and C). The rationale for digital recording was explained again during the informed consent process, and it was pointed out how recordings would not compromise anonymity of the respondent. It was also outlined how digital recordings would be stored on a password protected computer.

Students and practitioners were invited to participate in the study through invitation letter, and this was distributed electronically to the cohorts of students on their Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) under 'general announcements'. Here, students were directed to a particular designated 'space' for further information on the research (aims and objectives), where they then had the option to 'opt in' to the research and were directed to send an initial expression of intent to participate to the researcher.

## **2.18 Ethical Risks**

When risks are considered in social work research, the analysis of whether participants will be exposed to any harm is considered as paramount (Hardwick and Worsley, 2011). Protecting participants from any harm should be considered from the outset of research (Lewis, 2006). Reminding participants about confidentiality and access to data (i.e. who will read the transcripts) was important prior to

recording to alleviate any anxieties and concerns. In addition, boundaries (prior to the interview) were also communicated to participants in relation to confidentiality.

There can of course be less obvious risks in some research and more in others. Researchers have to take responsibility to minimise any risk of harm to those involved in the study, which includes not leaving respondents feeling used or undervalued in any way following their involvement (Hardwick and Worsley, 2011; McLaughlin, 2012). Information provided about the study outlined the right of respondents to end their involvement in the research whenever they wished to. Oliver (2003) outlines how this ethical imperative is a key principle of respondent involvement.

In the case of a student who was experiencing difficulties or distress from their social work training, it was deemed inappropriate to allow any participants in this situation to interview stage. Where this was applicable, the researcher would have known based on their position within the University as senior lecturer. All tutors on the social work programme are directly involved in placements. If this had been the case, the student would have been informed that an appropriate sample of interviews has been gained (which may be the case), or (if not) they would have been informed by the researcher that it was deemed inappropriate for the interview to proceed under the circumstances. This is because some students can have very difficult placement experiences, and it is not ethical to record respondents who are distressed by such events.

In the event of a student becoming distressed during an interview, the interview would have been terminated and the student would have been offered a debriefing opportunity with the personal tutor or researcher (qualified social worker).

## **2.19 Data Collection Methods, Sample and Context**

The cohorts of students for this research were recruited from a Welsh BA Honours undergraduate programme in 2011/12. The remaining samples of qualified practitioners were recruited from registered social workers in Wales, one of whom was in practice in an integrated mental health team. The remaining qualified social

worker was registered to work in agency social work, but was unemployed at the time of the interview. This respondent was studying postgraduate social work programmes at the University and so was invited to participate through similar electronic means. The sample, apart from one respondent (who had moved from a European community) identified as White Welsh but as non-Welsh speaking, with the exception of two students who identified as English (see appendix D). One respondent was fluent Welsh speaking, but opted for the interview to be conducted in English. All unqualified students resided in Wales and all placements had been undertaken in Welsh local authorities.

As Wales is saturated with cultural and linguistic diversity (Dalrymple and Burke, 1995; Drakeford and Morris, 1998; Davies, 2001), it is an important identification in this research. As researcher and my position as a senior lecturer on the BA Hons in Social Work programme, I also identify as Welsh and Welsh speaking, yet my interests and the purpose of this study were centred upon analysing how (through language) this represented local Welsh cultures of state social work. Echoing my own practice experiences as well as being consistent with the ethnographic stance of anthropological strangeness, my reflections of local authority cultures had influenced this research. The recurring linguistic features of discourses surrounding students and practitioners, alongside my own socialisation into social work, echoed a range of wider cultural narratives of social work which are not unique to Wales (see literature review).

Whilst this sample of ten students and two qualified practitioners might be considered small, most CDA approaches do not recommend a minimum or maximum sample for validity in discourse analytic studies (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Instead emphasis is placed upon methodological rigour, where the first stage is to identify the universe of possible texts in order to investigate and employ a textual analysis in line with the research questions (Mautner, 2009). The literature review (part 1) employed a textual analysis in the context of the widely accepted narratives surrounding the history and construction of social work. This provided a platform for identification of the key recurring linguistic features (discourses) inherent within these narratives.

In Stubbs's (1997) view the claims being made by discourse analysts are not tenable, because the method is often based on a small sample of texts which are considered as obtained unsystematically by the researcher; to counteract these criticisms, the sample of 12 respondents (which did not consist of choosing a newspaper article in the stereotypical assumptions of CDA) is in my view a considerable and comparative dataset representative of a small social work community in Wales. As Stubbs (1997) points out 'for CDA to be considered as a reliable method, analyses must be comparative: individual texts must be compared with each other' (p.10). The sample of three year one students, which informed a chronological ordering of data collection of a further five students in year two, alongside two students in year three and a final set of two qualified practitioners, shows how this research employed theoretical sampling in data collection. Theoretical sampling is viewed as never completely excluding the possibility of collecting more data, as new questions can arise as data is collected (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992).

## 2.20 Interview Schedule

The interview schedule was as follows:

<b>Activity</b>	End of Jan 2011	End of Mar 2011	End of May 2011	Start July 2011 – end of Jan 2012
<b>Complete data collection and sample</b>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3/ Qualified	
<b>Complete transcriptions</b>				Transcribing

Theoretical sampling requires building interpretative theories from the emerging data and is used in most qualitative investigations that require interpretation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1992). This form of sampling, considered a rigorous method of analysing qualitative data, is utilised in order to produce a theory. It consists of the researcher collecting and analysing the data in order to decide what to collect next. Consistent with the principles of CDA, it is a matter of

finding particular concepts, expanding concepts into categories and on that basis collecting further data (Wodak and Meyer, 2009).

This choice of systematic research method for the collection and analysis of qualitative data was driven by the rationale to explore at what point specific discourses emerge, change or remain the same in the educational journey. The research aims and objectives were to analyse whether these differ at different points of socialisation into practice and education. This allowed the research to consider the constitutive relationship between a culture and the social practices within it. This supports and sustains the background assumptions that every social practice within that culture orients to (Douglas, 1986). These cultures provide the implicit or background understandings of social work and are shared by other social workers. As Bourdieu (1993) points out, culture can be conceived as a deeply internalised set of habits (*habitus*) where human beings constantly recreate culture.

## **2.21 Power**

Power within this context is based on the premise: knowledge and power for whom and in what context? This is because respondents engage in a dialogue which views each participant as an equal, and provides a platform for critical thinking which fosters dialogue with learners. Through dialogue, self-awareness of the power of historical cultures and structures upon the subject is encouraged. Each individual engages in a process of 'reflection in action' as they experience their social work journey/practice. Power is thus considered in this study as drawing on the principles of anti-oppressive practice, where methods and ethical considerations are key choices in the active encouragement to address and illuminate the concept of power (see section 1.4). As noted by Everett, Smith and Williams (1992), a participatory approach makes explicit that power is fundamental in the research relationship. To subjugate and oppress less powerful individuals in research is not engaging in dialogue with research participants. Dialogue is considered essential in this research to discuss the range of shared perspectives and understandings of the social work identity (Stocking, 1983; Everett *et al.*, 1992; Green, 2002; Carspecken, 1996).



As mutual aid and discovery guided the principles adopted in this study, these can be directly aligned with radical humanism (Whittington and Holland, 1985). This is where the professional distance between researcher and the researched are reduced in order to develop a co-operative and participatory approach (Thomas, 1993). This is consistent with ethnographic studies, where developing rapport is considered the first stage of fieldwork and was a natural occurrence given my position as a university lecturer (Simon and Dippo, 1986; Thomas, 1993; Carspecken, 1996).

Over many years of teaching in Welsh social work programmes, this problem-posing dialogue facilitated the fieldwork choices, and enhanced and developed the ongoing critical analysis of social work discourses in the natural context in which it occurred. As a result, a pilot classroom-based activity was undertaken as part of the first phase of this study.

## **2.22 Classroom Based Activity (pilot): Deconstructing Placement Experiences**

This pilot draws on field notes and a recording of a year three student group (n=30) of social workers storytelling their experiences (in a lecture-based context) of their final 100 day practice placement. These field notes and the recorded lecture evidence the process of classroom-based dialogue that unpacked the discourses surrounding placement experiences, capturing the themes that were identified as a result of that dialogue. Adopting traditions of critical ethnomethodology, this activity drew on a narrative-based research framework.

As stories operate within interpretative communities of speakers and hearers that are politically as well as culturally crafted (Squire, 2008), narratives were explored and located in the interactions between the researcher and the research participant (Squire, 2005, 2008, 2013). This pilot study involved the interaction between learners and the researcher in a collaborative study with participants who collectively showed interest in exploring this phenomenon further. This phase of fieldwork expanded upon the context in which the narrative was told, and is consistent with 'experience-centred narratives' research methods which aim to

understand meaning in particular contexts (Squire, 2008, 2013). Researchers here explore contradictions and gaps within narratives as well as the words themselves, expanding and drawing on materials stemming from larger cultural and social narratives. Again, these research methods are consistent with ethnographic and CDA principles of collecting data.

Titled 'Transitional Narratives' (see appendix E), this pilot study (which can be understood as a feasibility study) was based on a small experiment designed to improve the quality and efficiency of the fieldwork phase. Lasting approximately one and a half hours, this revealed any difficulties of the procedure (types of questions to facilitate dialogue), and informed how these could be addressed before conducting the more formal stage of individual interviews in this fieldwork. Appendix E illustrates how questions were intended to facilitate critical dialogue surrounding how 'we', as social workers, have come to understand contemporary social work. In utilising a facilitative conversational approach (Freire, 1970), this typology used open-ended questioning strategies which require active listening. In essence, the researcher allows the group the freedom to talk and ascribe meanings drawn from their experiences (Carspecken, 1996; Fontana and Frey, 2000).

Again ethics were fully considered for this activity, and a separate ethics process was followed and submitted on top of the original research application in 2010. This is because the original ethics form had not considered this as part of the on-going fieldwork opportunities. Students were asked whether they wished to opt in or out (see appendix F). Information about the activity was well advertised to the learners prior to participation through their usual virtual learning environment (VLE). Consent forms were issued on the day and collected at the end of the lecture. The process of how this data would inform my further studies was clearly explained in the information disseminated to learners.

As researcher and ethnographer, I was immersed in the on-going activities of social work students, and this part of the fieldwork can be understood as an open ended emergent learning process and not a controlled experiment (Agar, 1980). What this means is that this research was based on an iterative process of continual

observations over the years and this part of the informal fieldwork added to the emic validity of this research. Derived from anthropological research, emic and etic describe two broad approaches to analysing language and culture (Pike, 1954). The term emic is based on the idea that only members of a culture possess valid knowledge of their own language usage. The emic validity in ethnographic research always starts from the inside of a culture and what this means in ethnography, consistent with the methodologies chosen in this study, is that emic validity of the study is increased by relating any analysis from the perspective of the person who is involved in the culture being studied (Pike, 1954; Zaharlik and Green, 1991).

Formulated in a presentation capturing key themes, this was made available to participants following the activity. In following the educational model of construction, deconstruction and re-construction titled 'Towards a deconstruction and reconstruction of social work discourses', the use of critical dialogue was facilitated by utilising a narrative research framework as outlined in section 1.4. Alongside appendix D, this illustrates what questions were asked to facilitate a re-construction of experiences of social work practice.

### **2.23 Semi-Structured Interviews and Transcription**

Although researchers adopt a variety of different methods within the tradition of ethnography, qualitative research embraces different paradigms such as post-positivist, constructivist and critical theory (Guba, 1990; Creswell and Miller, 2000). Whereas post-positivist research seeks to employ data collection methods which are systematic, constructivist research asserts that all knowledge is co-constructed and so prioritises depth over methodological procedures (Creswell and Miller, 2000). As such, qualitative enquiry employs data collection strategies such as in-depth interviews or participant observation (Polkinghorne, 2005). Use of Geertz's (1973) thick description is deemed particularly significant in constructivist epistemologies and ethnographic studies (Creswell and Miller, 2000; Lietz and Zayas, 2010).

The notion of thick description is aligned to interpretive ethnography in anthropology (Geertz, 1973; Denzin, 1989). It reflects a term used to denote deep,

dense, detailed accounts of a phenomenon being studied 'with particular consideration of the context(s) in which it occurs' (Denzin, 1989, p.83). Cultural analysis here is not concerned with experimental science, but an interpretive paradigm which is primarily concerned with the search for meaning of the phenomenon being studied (Geertz, 1973). The understanding of culture here draws on methods that provide the description and explanation of the meaning of particular social actions, and what meanings they have for the actors whose actions they are (Geertz, 1973). This denotes a thick description of social discourse and provides a vocabulary for the role of culture in human life.

In embracing traditions of critical deconstruction of narratives and discourses, the methodological tool 'anthropological strangeness' was adopted on a day-to-day basis during fieldwork (Garfinkel, 1967). Derived from social constructionism, anthropological strangeness involves the suspension of our cultural understandings and attempting to record something as though we are seeing it for the first time (Garfinkel, 1967). Fook (2012) notes how in social work research, critical reflection is required including the idea that we must question taken for granted assumptions to de-stabilise our own frames of reference and routines. Aligned with a type of comparative fieldwork, the researcher here compares cultures; but as noted in this research, sociological qualitative researchers are interested in studying their own cultures (Zaharlik and Green, 1991; Maxwell, 1996).

When evaluating the credibility of qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Morrow (2005) suggest researchers should plan and conduct their studies seeking to achieve trustworthiness. Understood as whether the study is credible, transferable, auditable and confirmable, the thick description is considered trustworthy as it provides a thorough representation and study of inquiry and its context as perceived and experienced by the participants involved (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004; Padgett, 2008). In drawing on the interpretivist tradition, the generation of the 'thick description' of the accounts of social workers underpinned the rationale for semi-structured descriptive interviews. Topic guides were drawn broadly from themes related to the literature review and pilot study. Understood as having the same purpose as descriptive observations in

ethnography, these were utilised to elicit broad categories of information provided by respondents from their own perspective. Miller and Glassner (1997) point out that though interviews in ethnography cannot provide a mirror reflection of the social world, they do provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences of the world, providing ethnographers with a means of exploring different points of view. It is also understood that points of view are granted a culturally honoured status of reality (Miller and Glassner, 1997).

Interviews encourage respondents to talk about a particular cultural scene (Spradley, 1979). The semi-structured interviews focused on generating data that included analysis of each respondent's word choices used to describe the culture. They also explored how social actors may use these terms routinely in the culture studied (Spradley, 1979). The interview principles were guided by Spradley's (1979) division of questioning which included: (1) descriptive, (2) structural and, (3) contrast questions. Descriptive questions, aimed to elicit a large sample of utterances in the informant's native language, are facilitated by simply asking a study participant for information using the terms and phrases most often used in the socio-cultural setting of the social actor (Spradley, 1979). For example, 'In what way do you think social workers 'help' people?' Following the initial questions that focused on description, as the study progressed structural and contrast questions were developed, generated from the information that had already been gained during the study (Spradley, 1979). This is because structural questions enable the ethnographer to gain information on the domains, or in this case, words (signs) that link to the respondent's cultural knowledge. For example, 'So you say it is about treatment, in what way?' Structural questions are often repeated to try to gain more adequate description of the domain or sign being explored. For example, 'Can you think of any other aspects that influenced you to come into social work?' Contrast questions on the other hand want to find out what the respondent means by the cultural domains (signs) being used. For example, 'In what way is it 'all about paper work and not people'?

These forms of descriptive questions represented a move from less structured to more structured questions, as one moves from collecting more general information

to a greater focus in the data collection (Spradley, 1979). Initial interview topic guides were designed to elicit information addressing broadly the research aims, but more specifically the research question. As the study developed, more questions were added exploring the domains or signs deployed during the interview.

Lasting approximately 40-60 minutes, the interviews were digitally recorded, coded anonymously and transcribed through denaturalised techniques. Oliver, Serovich and Mason (2005) note how denaturalised transcripts are suited to methodologies located in ethnography and CDA. This form of transcribing involves standardising interview material and removing interview noise such as pauses or stutters (Oliver et al., 2005). These are depicted as techniques capturing speech content without detailed description of speech acts. Duranti (2007) notes how transcription are key to transcription within qualitative research, as transcripts are viewed as central to analysis but provide evidence to support the researcher's claims (Ashmore and Reed, 2000; Duranti, 2007).

From a sociolinguistic point of view, transcription is understood as a political act (Green, Franquiz and Dixon, 1997) whereas Jaffe (2000) points out how the recording of speech reflects the transcriber's analytic perspective. Transcription in this research is understood to be a representational and interpretive process (Mischler, 1991). "Located in linguistic anthropology, transcription here is viewed as cultural practice or cultural activity, and transcripts are viewed as artefacts that possess 'temporal-historical dimensions'" (Duranti, 2007, p.302). Consistent with the most basic assumption of CDA, that any social relations and social order are created in interaction (semiosis), transcribing data here was aligned more towards a Foucauldian analysis of text. This is because this study is primarily concerned with discourses of the talk of social work and how those discourses are being circulated, produced and reproduced in talk at cultural (discursive) and wider (social) levels. Gee (1999) points out how researchers only need to transcribe the words of talk and who the speaker is. He adds that if the analysis is concerned with grammar usage, then transcribing words only with some fairly basic intonational features is enough in CDA. In the context of the larger data set of this research (in comparison

to some discourse analytic studies), a non-verbal system applied to the transcripts showing silent periods and overlap between speakers was considered enough in drawing on Jefferson's (1985) basic system (Wetherell and Potter, 1992) (See appendix G for one example of the interview transcription and interviews that took place.)

As (critical) ethnography and critical theory provided the interpretive and analytical framework for this research (Fine 1994), it is worth re-iterating how the qualitative researcher studies things in their own field or setting (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). Here this research explores the language of student social workers within their natural learning environment. Creswell (1998) notes that there are five qualitative inquiry traditions: ethnography, phenomenology, biography/narrative, grounded theory, and case studies. These can also include critical, feminist and action research (Olesen, 2000; Hardwick and Worsley, 2011). Whilst many of these methods, such as case studies and narrative-based inquiry, can be easily appropriated to the study of language, this study primarily drew on ethnographic principles in the endeavour to understand the cultural context from within. Not only does this involve the exploration of discursive practices aligned specifically to the research questions, but this topic of study leads to a process of inquiry where, as researcher, you are immersed in the ongoing social activities of the culture (Wolcott, 2005). In drawing on interpretivist traditions and ethnographic principles of interviewing, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with the cohorts of students, designed to gain adequate (thick) descriptions of the key aspects of social work relating to the cultural world in which are a part (Spradley, 1979).

In utilising Spradley's method of deconstructing native terms, this guided data collection focused on technique of interview as well as content (what is said). Following inductive principles of gathering data, as discourses emerged questions were added to further interviews exploring a similar subject or use of language.

## **2.24 Reflexivity**

What is important in interviews is self-awareness of the researcher's bias in questioning techniques (such as leading and closed questions). On re-reading transcripts, one could see where bias and personal construction had taken place. Where this was the case, this data was not utilised and informed further self-awareness in the fieldwork. An ethical review of our own behaviour as researcher is considered essential and in research this is referred to as a reflexive approach (Hardwick and Worsley, 2011). Reflexivity, then, is understood as reflectiveness on the implications of the researcher's knowledge of the social world they investigate in the context of biases, values and decisions made during the study (Bryman, 2004, p.543).

As researcher and social worker, engaging in a reflexive dialogue about one's own knowledge and understanding of social work language is essential (Taylor and White, 2000; Fairclough, 2001; Fook, 2012). This can be described as a process of looking inward and outward, looking to the cultural artefacts and forms of thought which have saturated one's own practices, thoughts, values and beliefs, which requires a degree of self-awareness (Taylor and White, 2001; Taylor 2006).

Though beginning this research journey with an awareness of my own paradigm of viewing the world from a social constructionist and post-structuralist epistemology/ontology solely in the context of discourses, there was active acknowledgement of my own decisions in the methodological choice of CDA aligned with this research (Horsburgh, 2003). Whilst this favoured interest provided a sound starting point in the analysis of discourse, consideration of how this might impact upon the meaning and context of the language being explored was duly thought through. I had not really considered the power of discourses upon the subject in the context of ideology and its effects. This demonstrated to me how self-awareness is needed for the critical discourse analyst who could otherwise interpret a text in keeping with their own ideological formations. Fish (1983) warns us of the dangers of such interpretive positivism – using linguistic data as a way of confirming decisions and interpretation already arrived at concerning the meaning of a text.



This thoughtful consideration of one's own standpoint through reflection (Johnson and Waterfield, 2004) resulted in what can only be described as a paradigm shift towards wider critical theories in analysing discourses. As Horsburgh (2003) notes, reflexivity is based on an 'active acknowledgement by the researcher that her/his own actions and decisions will inevitably impact upon the meaning and context of the experience under investigation' (p.308). Davies (2008) refers to this as reflexive ethnography, whilst Brewer (2000) notes how this consists of not one particular method of data collection but a style of research that is distinguished by its research objectives. To explore the social meanings in the context of language of social work without a pre-determined knowledge base of social constructionism, or any other paradigm, this study embraced the theoretical diversity and transdisciplinary approaches consistent with methodological principles of CDA and critical theory. In the endeavour to counteract one's own bias, it is important to re-iterate that this research is based on a form of inquiry or logic that engages in dialogue with a range of theoretical perspectives drawn from critical theory/social work, and was a matter of ongoing dialogue between other social theories and explanations throughout. Whilst reflexivity is understood within methodology as the reflectiveness among social researchers about the implications of knowledge of the social world they generate (Bryman, 2004), it is a term littered throughout social work literature and used interchangeably with reflectivity (Taylor and White, 2000; Taylor, 2006; Fook, 2012). Reflexivity goes beyond reflection, however, as it is a process of looking inwards to consider how experiences have influenced our thinking and learning (Taylor and White, 2000; Butler, Ford and Tregaskis, 2007). In other words, we assume a position that we don't know the answer before we begin the process of reflecting, and draw attention to the position of the knower and how it influences what is known (Taylor and White, 2000; Taylor, 2006; Fook, 2012). Within CDA, this is referred to as 'members' resources', a term used by Fairclough (2003) to include concepts that have been formed in people's heads and which we can draw upon when we interpret texts, including their knowledge of language and the social world they inhabit. Fairclough (1996) notes how in CDA it is self-consciousness that separates the researcher from the participants being analysed.

## Chapter 2, Part 3: Data Analysis Tools

### 2.25 Fairclough's Seven Dimensions Textual Analysis

This part of the chapter provides an overview of the theories and ideas behind each of the seven dimensions of analysis. Each dimension is aligned to its practicalities in critical social work. Moreover, this section of the thesis describes and explains how data analysis was undertaken and provides the context to the following data presentation chapter. It concludes with a reflection on the limitations and complexities of the theories underpinning Fairclough's model.

Both Toolan (2002) and Stubbs (1997) point out that CDA was often criticised for failing to approach texts systematically. Fairclough (1989) addressed these by tackling what many discourse analysts call the level of description in his textual analysis. Here description means ascertaining the experiential, relational or expressive values of the words or grammatical structures in the text. The following table explains these values further.

### 2.26 Table 3: Level of Description in Textual Analysis

<b>Experiential values</b>	Understood as representing the experience of social world. Represents their knowledge and beliefs which reflect their own world views in the social and cultural world (Fairclough, 2001).
<b>Relational values</b>	Refers to social relations and relationships providing the listener with insight into power, tension, conflict and harmony, and providing a way in which to analyse the underlying relational meaning given to the interaction depicted (Fairclough, 2001).
<b>Expressive values</b>	Reflects the evaluative stance taken in relation to the account given and how this speaks of the identity of qualities of either (Fairclough, 2001).

In essence, what this means is that the text analysis is not simply language analysis in the Saussurian sense, but is concerned with socially determined language use. Such a view implies the Foucauldian tradition in the identification of discourse as a form of social practice understood to derive from a range of dominant knowledge

formations of any given society (Weiss and Wodak, 2003; Mayr, 2008; Machin and Mayr 2012).

Fairclough's seven dimensional analysis is underpinned by Fowler, Hodge, Kress and Trew's (1979) theory of critical linguistics and Halliday's (1973) systemic functional grammar. These draw on a range of critical linguistics in the social semiotic analysis of language use. For example, Halliday's social-functional approach privileges the position of language in the socialisation process. This is because language is seen as part of the social system; and whilst the psychological level of interpretation is considered a relevant perspective, the analysis is extended and viewed as essentially a system of meaning potential related to a higher structure of language. Word choices and grammar, for example, are considered to effect behaviour and action within a social semiotic system.

What these theories and Fairclough's textual analysis offer critical social work is a way to interlink several layers (historical, cultural, ideological) of discourse to the identity, role and practice (action/role) of social work. It considers the extent to which these discourses influence practice on and through a variety of levels (personal, cultural and structural). In essence, it relates the structure of language (langue) to the communicative function and experience (action and interaction) of social workers. Moreover, it identifies how the cultural transmission and the maintenance of social systems are inherently built upon linguistic concepts (words). The literature review (part one) illustrated how linguistic concepts available in social work showed how it was viewed as a co-constructed activity/profession drawn from the most dominant ideologies and epistemè (favoured knowledge) of any given time. For example, managerialism as the dominant ideology of the welfare state alongside empiricism (in the language of 'outcomes') has saturated social work practice.

The following table outlines the seven dimensions of Fairclough's (1989) textual analysis, and offers critical social work an interpretive approach to exploring social work discourses by drawing on a range of critical linguistic theories.

## 2.27 Categories of Seven Dimensions of Textual Analysis in the Context of Social Work

1	<b>Vocabulary</b> (use of words and their ideological and political significance in social work).
2	<b>Grammar</b> (use of verbs and how this represents the 'action' (role) of social work).
3	<b>Cohesion</b> (use of pronouns and how this speaks of the alignment of the social actor's identity alongside others).
4	<b>Text structure</b> (how the account is structured in the context of a narrative lens of analysis).
5	<b>Force of utterance</b> (use of metaphor or rhetoric in the processing of information and performance of social work).
6	<b>Constitution/coherence</b> (how the account is coherent with wider ideologies of social work and society/social structures).
7	<b>Intertextuality</b> (how accounts link to past (history) and present (contemporary) narratives of social work).

(Adapted from Jones, M., 2003 in Joseph and Roberts 2003, p. 46).

In Fairclough's (1992) seven dimensions vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, force of utterance and text structure are understood as the micro-analysis of the text. CDA extends these categories to embrace critical linguistics at the macro-level through the additional concepts constitution (coherence) and intertextuality (Machin and Mayr, 2012). These two concepts provide a way in which to relate the micro-properties in the texts with discursive and social practices (second and third dimensions of CDA model/macro).

The following chapter (data presentation) shows how the application and analysis of the use of words, verbs, pronouns, metaphor/rhetorical devices and text structures (micro-analysis) were undertaken. The latter two concepts are interpretivist and less mechanical in analysis. In conjunction with Fairclough's three dimensional model of discourse analysis, the two (macro) dimensions of intertextuality and constitution (coherence) were applied through the identification of discourse themes that were drawn from the micro-analysis. In essence, these

provide the discussion chapters (four and five) presented in this thesis. Whilst they are illuminated in the data presentation, they are not expanded upon because the subsequent chapters engage in a critical dialogue that analyses the origins and effects of these discourses by drawing on a range of critical theories.

Whilst criticisms of CDA as a method are based on a perceived over-emphasis on the micro, CDA's effectiveness lies in its ability to analyse the social (macro) in conjunction with the micro (Pennycook, 2001; Luke, 2002). Previous contributions in critical linguistics had focused on grammar and vocabulary, but were less concerned with coherence and an intertextual analysis of texts such as Saussure. As a result Fairclough in *Language and Power* (1989) developed his seven dimensional micro-analysis.

Stage one of the micro-analysis involved devising units of analysis derived from the theories underpinning vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, force of utterance and text structure (see appendix H). Halliday (1989) points out that the first step when starting analysis is to identify the units of analysis which are understood as segmentation. This includes analysing words, verbs, sentences, metaphors, rhetorical devices or elements of the structure (organisational properties) of the text.

CDA researchers choose to focus on just one or many of the features of the seven dimensions such as the use of a particular word (Fairclough, 1992; Machin and Mayr, 2012). This research chose to draw on all seven dimensions in order to analyse the whole context of social work discourses. Separating out categories would fail to represent this diversity, and in utilising the full seven dimensions this research provides consistency in the analysis. As many concepts and their theories underpinning each dimension overlap, they subsequently provide a slightly different analytical (conceptual) lens. This shows how theoretical triangulation is applied throughout this analysis, because permanent switching between levels and evaluating the findings from different theoretical perspectives is considered to minimise the risk of being biased in CDA (Weiss and Wodak, 2003).

## 2.28 Vocabulary (words)

Fairclough's (1992) seven dimensional analysis begins with analysing words and how these represent a range of ideas (concepts). These ideas are drawn from a variety of knowledge formations at any given time and linked to political and ideological significance. CDA, influenced by the work of Fowler *et al.* (1979), argues that 'signifying' (in the use of deploying specific words) represents the world which happens differently in different times and places for different groups of people. This is because words and knowledge are embedded within institutional and social practices (e.g. the state apparatus). In CDA, words are aligned to the production and reproduction (discursive practices) of social practices and structures within their wider ideological context.

The words that student and qualified social workers deploy predominantly signify a range of ideas in social work knowledge. These ideas will result in ways of (inter-) acting and represent a range of cognitive, socio-cultural, historical and ideological/political domains. To illustrate this point, the management of 'problem families' in contemporary policy (e.g. Troubled Families) is a sound example of how certain language (words) is used politically to control the social 'evils' of the day (Welsh Assembly Government, 2010). Words such as 'dysfunctional families' will inevitably be drawn upon by the social worker and show what ideas or conceptualisations might underpin their actions. Such an understanding of the function of language as an expression of ideology is crucial to the practice of radical/critical social work practice (Carey 2012; Fook, 2012). It enables the practitioner and researcher to make links between social structure and agency (individual action). What is important in critical social work is not so much the truth of the content of ideology, but the social control functions behind them (Fook, 2012). Such beliefs feed into how the status of social work is understood within and outside the profession, as well as the sorts of power its members are deemed to have.

In summary, the words used or not by social workers are like maps which are symbolic of the social work territory. These maps carry different meanings and signify specific discourses in social work. Word choices can be made by social actors,

but without necessarily making an overt case of what is meant. Moreover, words can also be placed in a particular order showing a range of networks of meanings. The social worker can therefore use language when in work to be explicit (i.e. directing) or implicit (i.e. convey acceptance or ambivalence to clients).

Networks of meanings such as classes of concepts can include the presentation of ideas in either/or ways. As the literature review pointed out, the dichotomising of concepts such as the rational-technical and the practical-moral aspects of social work are considered problematic for the social worker, as many of these ideas (often viewed as two opposing paradigms) can force subjects to privilege some ideas over others. Suffice to note that these binary oppositions will influence the constructions and (inter-) actions of social workers, showing how this is an important component of critical practice. At the practice level, the behaviour and practices which arise from ideological beliefs will lead to a set of customs or roles the social actor will 'perform' to in the arena of social work (Fook, 2012). Notwithstanding this, subjects in this research are not considered as empty vessels that are filled solely by ideology; subjects are considered to have agency and self-consciousness, and this is returned to during the discussion on grammar below.

To conclude, CDA in the context of the use of vocabulary (words) offers social work researchers and educationalists opportunities to understand how ways of talking about the world of social work, and its associated knowledge frameworks and language, actually co-construct it. In other words, the co-construction of social work and its linguistic map can be aligned to the concept of ideology, and allows for analysis of how power operates within social work (Fook, 2012). It shows how ideas of social actors in social work (at the micro-level) are aligned with social discourses by utilising and building on the concept of ideology. Fairclough's textual analysis is a useful tool for critical social work practice, and this analysis in CDA identifies a way in which to isolate ideology in discourse, showing 'how ideology and ideological processes are manifested as systems of linguistic characteristics and processes' (Trew, 1979, p.155).

The units of analysis devised for word choices are illustrated in appendix H – Table 1 and the data presentation focuses on word choices and structural (binary) oppositions only, whereas word suppression is discussed fully in subsequent chapters during analysis and discussion.

### **2.30 Grammar (verbs and words)**

In socio-linguistics, grammar is the set of structural rules that governs the composition of verbs and words (Halliday, 1989). By interpreting the words and grammatical (verb) choices and how these are put together, quoting verbs in CDA is understood to represent ‘action’ and ‘interaction’ of any social context. In simple terms, verbs uncover the principle of who or what does what to whom or what? (Fowler, 1987). In social work, the use of verbs such as ‘support’ or ‘treat’ indicate what type of (inter-) actions are deemed to take place in the social work role (doing) and relationship. On closer inspection, verbs that represent doing in social work might be characteristics that draw links to personal beliefs (personal identity) about themselves, such as being a caring person. This will show what the social actor thinks are the characteristics that go together with the social identity of social work.

As well as representing action, the grammatical dimension in CDA provides the analyst with a means of discovering how certain uses of words and verbs in a text (account) illustrate a particular worldview of a speaker (Fowler, 1987; Machin and Mayr, 2012). Using the verb ‘give’, for example, indicates what types of behaviours or practices the social work professional is deemed to have and illuminates how the social work role is constructed. It also points to the social actor’s experiential, expressive and relational values, and how these are communicated in the text. It also illustrates what evaluative stance has been adopted in depicting the relationship and identity of both sets of actors (service user and social worker). In essence, the analyst studies what social workers are depicted as doing in playing this particular role, and considers what is being conveyed through the use of these verbs and words and who is given the subject (agent) or object (effect) through verb processes (Machine and Mayr, 2012).



To summarise in part, grammar marks the social actor's interpretation of social events and indicates the enactment of certain social relations between individuals. Grammar also mirrors the social actor's personal values, desires and beliefs within situational contexts (personal identity). This is what Halliday (1973) understands as ideational and interpersonal meaning within grammar (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

Ideational meaning in verb use (grammar) represents action and is a way of (inter-) acting in social events incorporating relation (enacting social relations) and identities (Fairclough, 1992). This is linked to style in CDA as it is directly related to identity (personal and social) and focuses on the dialectical relationship of the construction of self. As noted earlier in this chapter (part one), these styles are understood as ways of being (Archer, 2000).

This means identity is not reduced to social or personal identities, but adopts a post-structuralist and postmodernist concept of self. Here the subject is partly understood to be an effect of discourse and constructed in discourse (Shotter and Gergen, 1994a; Fairclough, 2003; Fook, 2012). Yet social identities are understood as both ascribed to by others (in discourse) by those in positions of power (labelling), as well as social actors ascribing to, adopting or rejecting discourses aligned with identity. This will be achieved through the enactment or avoidance of specific social roles in pursuit of that identity. By personifying these discourses, the social actor will invest in a range of constructions by incorporating specific roles in conjunction with personal values, beliefs and attitudes (personal identity) (Shotter and Gergen, 1989). As Burkitt (1991) points out, 'it is through language that people internalize the attitudes of the social group and, on that basis, form their subjective attitudes' (p.36).

This shows how (in this context) social actor's personal and social identities are inextricably linked and multifaceted. Constructed in or co-constructed within a multitude of discourses, identities can however be reconstructed, depending upon the agency and self-consciousness of the subject.

This is what Fairclough (2003) referred to as social processes of identification, understood as the continual construction of social and personal identities which are

drawn from a variety of discourses (e.g. 'mother' or 'father'). Within these processes, self-consciousness is given *a priori* status: self-consciousness is assumed on the agent's part as 'there before' socialisation into social work domains. This is because self-consciousness is understood as the continuous process of construction and sense of self, and so requires agency. Referring to oneself as 'I' shows how the self is capable of self-reference and self-consciousness, whether in speech or in thought (Archer, 2000; Fairclough, 2003; Lowe, 2008).

Whilst there is some truth in the effects of discourse upon the construction of self (a key concept of Foucault (1972) in post-structuralist theory), it can also be problematic in recognising social actors as social agents. This is because social agents are viewed as able to create and change things in their practical engagement with the world. Archer (2000) points out how social and personal identity is neither guaranteed nor ever reached nor confirmed nor completed. This means that a personal and social identity is constantly sought through social processes of identification, and so the social work identity might never be complete, showing resonance with a constant shifting, changing and often contradictory range of ideas.

With the ability to identify discourses, each social actor in this study is assumed to have agency to draw on several discourses at the same time (e.g. a wife, mother and student) (Monk, Winslade, Crocket and Epston, 1997). This is because the social worker as agent is capable of choosing to adopt, ascribe to or reject discourses available in social processes of identification aligned with social work.

Whilst people are considered primary agents because they are born into an already pre-determined material world in which they have no choice about their gender, class and position within society's distribution of resources (known as givens), social actors are considered to have the capacity to transform some of these (Archer 2000). To illustrate this point further, it is possible to change roles in the context of gender based on stereotypes. This is dependent upon the subject's insight (self-consciousness) and reflexivity. As Lowe (1998) proposes 'the self is by very nature an agent, something that is naturally capable of performing intentional actions, some of them with physical results' (p. 19). What Lowe (1998) means here is that

action can result in physical (actual) change and in the context of discourses, it is possible, through a process of conscientisation for social actors to influence societal and cultural change. A change in discourses surrounding women's rights led to revised legislative frameworks such as equal pay and the right to vote. This is not dissimilar to sexuality which led to civil rights in marriage of same sex individuals. Both examples show how a change in societal discourse and culture can lead to societal change at the structural level. In the context of this study, social workers can initiate change on a variety of levels through language, even if this involves a simple shift at the micro-level. This demonstrates how social workers are considered to have their own power, but are not thought of as free agents because of a range of social constraints (Archer, 2000). Yet social actors will, and do, contribute to and reinforce social processes of identification because social actors set up social relations based on a range of prior discourses. Social and personal identities in social work are inextricably linked to a range of belief systems and values which also show the dialectical effects of social structures upon agency: in essence, the construction of self (personal and social identity).

The becoming subject (social worker) during social processes of identification will deploy a range of words and verbs in the form of discourses drawn from wider social and institutional discourses. These are inextricably linked with the social actor's personal identity and motivation, as they will have invested cognitively and emotionally to concepts drawn from language. Depicting experiential and relational values, verb choices will not only speak of the role and (inter-) actions of social work, but will also speak of the social identity of both sets of social actors (service user and social worker). This is because each account (text) will be characterised by a range of professional genres and institutional discourses. Showing the systematic organisation of ideas in the form of verbs and words, the ideology of the professional social worker can be analysed in the grammatical dimension of Fairclough's textual analysis. It will show how this denotes and supports the superior status of members of that social group (Fook, 2012).

In order to analyse how social actors have interpreted the social world they are part of, Halliday's verb classifications of material, behavioural, mental, verbal, existential

and relational verbs informed the units of analysis for grammar in this study. The data analysis and presentation focuses on the material processes of doing only focusing on what verbs are used to denote the role and action of social workers (see appendix H, Table 2).

### **2.31 Cohesion**

Fairclough (1992) discusses cohesion by analysing the use of pronouns. Pronouns are the use of the words I, she, he, we, us, they, them as well as me, our, yours or you, and show how different identity alignments work in the 'here and now'. Despite the preoccupation in linguistics on the syntactic properties of pronouns, Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990) noted that previous theories had ignored their relevance to cultural (discursive practices) and social structures.

In CDA however a more sociolinguistic account is drawn upon their use, focusing on the relationship between pronouns used and how these reflect a particular kind of relationship (Wodak and Meyer, 2009; Cramer 2009). They represent the social actor's agency to function within aspects of those identities and relationships. This shows how language in social work is not neutral and shows an expression of a particular attempt to impose meaning in a situation. It is more than words, and involves power and the construction of self in relation to others.

Power in this sense is analysed through the use of pronouns and positioning in the text which reveals the relations (subject position) of the narrator. Power here operates in the everyday interaction of the social worker, and can be positive and productive as well as repressive and negative (Fook, 2012). In social work, if a social worker uses 'they' all the time as opposed to a person's first name, then it denotes a particularly depersonalised discourse in which to discuss an individual service user. It also suggests what assumptions of service users' identities social workers have made. Social actors can impersonalise or personalise others through the use of pronouns showing a particular social distancing and construction of the other.

Social distance marking in socio-linguistics is understood as social positioning within discourse, and shows where the social actor positions their identity

alignment (construction of self) in the context of others (Machin and Mayr, 2012). This is because each use of a pronoun constructs some part of the identity of the speaker, and will outline how I, she, he, we, they (others) are constructed. This shows where the power and construction of self might lie. The use of 'our' can represent unity for example, or 'we' implies group reference in social processes of identification. 'They' or 'them', on the other hand, might denote an unwillingness to be identified as part of that group (Goffman, 1974; Shotter and Gergen, 1994b; Monk *et al.*, 1997; Machin and Mayr, 2012).

The use of pronouns allows this research to unpack how the social actor constructs their self in relation to other social workers as well as service users. Moreover, this provides critical social work with a way to analyse how relationships are being constructed. These are then studied in conjunction with dominant discourses which might contain discriminatory and taken for granted assumptions. For example, genericism such as the use of older people and young children (which social workers discuss through professional categorisation processes) is an everyday practice. Notwithstanding this it serves to reinforce professional identities and these categorising processes contain social discourses embedded in taken for granted discourses often reflecting wider social discourses. An example would be where a social worker might say, 'I don't mind gay people, as long as they stick to themselves'. Not only does this provide a mental representation of gay people that the social actor might hold, but it also contains a range of power dynamics that reflect wider social relationships. This analysis offers critical social work a way to reconstruct social relationships inherent in ways of speaking. Through analysis of the use of pronouns, this dimension encourages a platform for critical thinking and reflection specifically in the context of anti-discriminatory practice, because any meaning given socially is always contestable and changeable (Purvis and Hunt, 1993). (See appendix H, Table 3b.)

## **2.32 Text Structure**

Fairclough (1992) understands that each text (account or narrative) has a structure. This includes identification of how elements or episodes are combined in different

ways (Boje, 1991). The idea of narrative is closely related to discourse and text structure since narratives in themselves are a discourse or contain a range of discourses. This is because narratives and discourse are drawn from interaction and meanings which are mediated through socially constructed powerful practices (White and Epston, 1989; Milner, 2001; Fook, 2012). In critical social work, discourse, language and narratives can develop new insights into challenging dominant power arrangements (Fook, 2012). The literature review illustrated how narratives of social workers included presenting a case in a particular way to encourage a collective diagnosis. The case narrative colluded to a range of powerful labelling discourses available in social work knowledge formations, as well as wider societal labelling processes such as the 'hysterical' client.

Narratives and their text structure are understood as higher level design features in CDA. In narrative texts the flow of events is construed as a series of incidents and developed into a step-by-step sequence. Each narrative will also illustrate the expressive and relational values of the social actor (Boje, 1991; Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004). Including genres and their organisational properties (understood as several coherent themes or a dominant plot), this analysis provides this research with additional ways in which to identify how the social actor has constructed reality (Boje, 1991; Monk et al., 1997).

Each narrative will consist of a web of complex inter-relationships and discourses which are part of the ongoing network of production, distribution and consumption within discursive practices (i.e. social work cultures, structures and ideological contexts). To illustrate this point, the case narrative (discussed in the literature review) was recounted so as to show how social workers deployed key phrases or words drawn from contemporary policy. It included appropriating a range of legal and medical plots and showed how the social actor 'presented' social work. This demonstrated that when interlinked with the concept of 'social accountability', individual social workers talk in certain established ways (genres) in order to meet the demands placed on the status of the social work identity (Shotter and Gergen, 1994b). It also showed the agency and skill of the social worker in crafting a rhetorically satisfying case narrative.

Utilising Derrida's (1999) principles of deconstruction of the narrative and the work of Boje and Dennehy (1993, 2008) provided the initial guidelines as to how to deconstruct narratives in the context of CDA. The units devised for analysis in this dimension were influenced by the work of Boje (2001); Bal (1997) and White and Epston (1989). Accounts were analysed in this study in conjunction with how stories or examples were presented. This included analysing what aspects were marginalised or missing altogether in the narrative, as well as the identification of a dominant script/plot through the use of word and verb choices (see appendix B, Table 4).

Text structures within narratives are paramount in critical social work and discourse analysis as this allows for the identification of several key themes or contradictions in the narrative. These key themes or contradictions can indeed derive from past social work narratives and history (intertextuality), illuminating how some narratives/discourses might be more a product that arises from cultural socialisation within local authority contexts (discursive practices). As a result some of these discourses will be more dominant and powerful than others.

Offering critical social work a way in which to view how each narrative is a version of reality allows this study to understand that each account is viewed as coloured by the position and perspective of the person whose story it is (Fook, 2012). This version of the story is also considered to change according to audience, context, time and place, and relates to wider pre-determined narratives and discourses surrounding social work. The role of the analyst here is one of interpretation where each story can be 'read' as a 'text'. Imperative to critical social work research and practice, narrative analysis is key to understanding how social workers construct their 'realities' during social processes of identification, and how this might manifest itself in the text as highlighting their social identity and practice of social work.

### **2.33 Force of Utterance**

A force of utterance refers to 'what the speaker actually wants to achieve in functional, communicative terms' (Nunan, 1999, p.131). Machin and Mayr (2012) refer to this as persuading with abstraction through the deployment of rhetoric or

metaphor. The study of both metaphor and rhetoric is useful for critical social work practice because these units of analysis can be closely aligned to political rhetoric and ideologies in social work. How the subject has been persuaded by policy and rhetoric in their cognitive processes is important, because social workers during social processes of identification will continually think of things by reference to other concepts in order to understand them. An example of this is how 'person-centred' care has seeped into all health and social care policies. Suffice to note that the student and qualified practitioner may construct social work based on these principles despite the reality on the ground floor.

Metaphors refer to something other than what it originally meant; they are a type of thinking that underlies statements about the world (Semino, 2008). Metaphors can help the analyst grasp what kinds of knowledge appeals to the social actor and how the social actor processes information at a cognitive level. A common term 'make a difference' is used by social workers as a way in which to justify why they entered the profession. These metaphors become accepted as to what social work and its 'effects' are deemed to have on people's lives. Fairclough (1995a) notes how metaphors have hidden ideological loadings due to the way they can conceal and shape understanding. As such, this provides critical social work with one linguistic way of understanding social relations drawn from wider ideologies, and how subjects process information in the context of the social work identity.

Rhetorical devices on the other hand are what Fairclough (1992) refers to as rhetorical schemata (concepts). These are how groups of statements are combined through the use of descriptions, deductions and definitions, and are considered to characterise the architecture of a text. As noted in this thesis, a good piece of casework in social work was one that was considered to be rhetorically satisfying and couched or pitched in a particular way using contemporary phrases from social policy initiatives. Rhetorical devices show how institutions which govern social policies can construct a representation of the world, and the social worker can perform and craft an account so that they are deemed as satisfactorily supporting the organisation's strategic interests. This one dimension (force of utterance) out of the seven offers critical social work a way to understand how social workers



organise and make sense of the world around them (cognitively), as well as the rhetorical strategies they employ in narrating the social work role. (See appendix H, Table 5.)

### **2.34 Constitution (coherence)**

Fairclough (1992) understands constitution as the coherence of a text. It is a property which interpreters impose upon accounts. This is not solely based on analysing the structure of the text; the analyst is also concerned with how these types of texts (accounts) are consumed and reconstituted by social actors (considered as drawn from wider ideological and social forces). Here the researcher utilises a top-down (macro) approach, which means analysing the wider powers and structures of discourses and narratives through extending (in a bottom-up way) the themes drawn from the accounts during the micro-level analysis. In essence, the researcher analyses how the micro features of accounts relate to wider macro discourses, but specifically in the context of ideological coherence.

In analysing the textual coherence of accounts with wider ideological, historical and social forces (Joseph 2004; Roberts and Joseph, 2004), the literature review provided the framework for the researcher with a way to analyse the coherence of the accounts at the micro-level with wider narratives and discourses of social work at the macro level. The accounts of social actors in this study were then extended to how the discourse themes identified (from the micro-analysis) were considered as textually coherent with discourses surrounding ideological and knowledge formations in social work (as illustrated in the literature review). To reiterate then, each discourse theme identified from the micro-properties of the text goes beyond the structure of the narrative and account, and analyses how these have ideological coherence with wider social forces that influence the construction of social work.

Studying ideological coherence of texts included analysing the consistent use of verb tense, sentence topics and use of pronouns, and requires the active interpretation of the researcher who draws on their own background knowledge (Brown and Yule, 1983). Coherence of accounts does not have units of analysis because it requires the interpreter to justify the interpretation, by showing how

compatible the discourse themes (identified in the research) are with the features of past texts in social work (history and ideology). This is discussed and demonstrated in chapters four and five.

## **2. 35 Intertextuality**

Similarly, intertextuality is also discussed in these later chapters and has no units of analysis. The term was first mentioned in the literature review to note how the accounts of social workers included wider pre-determined texts, narratives and voices from social work cultures. Part one of chapter two (methodology) also demonstrated how narratives were aligned to the concept of intertextuality, through critical deconstruction showing the rationale for aligning narrative analysis to this research consistent with the theories underpinning Fairclough's (1992) seven dimensional analysis.

The term, which originally derived from Kristeva (1986), illustrated how texts are shaped by prior texts, or signs in Saussure's terms (Boje, 2001; Mayr 2008). What this means is that the words of one are carried by others, and so implies the insertion of history (society) into a text and text into history. By the insertion of history, the text absorbs and builds on texts from the past (Mayr, 2008; Machin and Mayr, 2012). The concept of diagnosis in casework can be aligned with both Victorian and post-war discourses of social work: when a subject accounts for social work as constituting 'treatment', this can be viewed as reworking past texts of clinical social work drawn from post-war discourses. This historicity of texts enables critical discourse analysts to understand how intertextuality draws attention to the discourse types available within the territory. These include the configuration of conventionalised practices such as genres (e.g. case talk), and well refined discourses of social work such as 'deskilling'. These examples show how discourses are available to social actors' in particular social circumstances. Understood as the constitutive view of discourse, CDA draws on the conceptions of Foucault (1972) which views discourse as actively constituting or constructing society on a variety of levels: it constructs the objects of knowledge, forms of self (subjectivity) and social

relationships (Foucault, 1972; Fairclough 1992; Weiss and Wodak, 2003; Machin and Mayr, 2012).

The relationship between hegemony and discourse in intertextuality is an important one because it points to the productivity and consumption of texts (Gramsci, 1971; Fairclough 1992; Machin and Mayr, 2012). Discourses can transform prior texts and restructure existing genres to generate new ones (Fairclough, 1995a). These discourses are understood to have power over society and represent discursive structures and events, and refer to what Fairclough called orders of discourse. This vertical analysis of intertextuality is drawn upon in CDA to outline how relations between a text and other texts constitute either immediate or distant (past) contexts of social work. This provides this research with opportunities to align wider (meta-) narratives to the micro-features of accounts in social work. Moreover, it illuminates how power relations shape, and are shaped by, discursive/social structures and practices.

This instigates the second and third stage of analysis which is more theoretical and based on interpretivist principles in qualitative inquiry. The researcher aligns the previous discourse themes to their relationship with discursive and social practices (orders of discourse), and engages in a dialogue between a range of theories and disciplines. The interpreter justifies the relationship of prior texts by discriminating and identifying how these interrelate with wider orders of discourse, for example social ideologies such as neo-liberalism. According to Fairclough (1989) from the point of interpretation of discourse themes and how these relate to discursive practices, the analyst can quickly go on to the final stage by illuminating their relationship (explanation) with wider social forces (historical and ideological). This is because after the seven dimensions of textual analysis have taken place, discursive practices and orders of discourses (social practices) are illuminated through analysis. This provides the platform for the analysis and discussion chapters of this thesis.

## **2. 36 A Reflexive Pause and Summary**

In reflecting on Halliday's (1978) perspective grounded on the assumption that social actors choose language to construe reality, I considered the possible contradictions inherent within this proposition. In the use of 'I' in accounts, self-awareness and the presentation of self might not always be at the forefront of the social actor's mind, and so language choice may not always be conscious. Not all social actors are necessarily self-conscious and reflexive at all times. Linked by psychoanalytic theorists, the Freudian concept of unconsciousness was aligned to the study of discourse, and understood as a hidden mental entity which cognitive psychologists aimed to describe and analyse. These weaknesses were illustrated mainly by Lacanian psychoanalysts; they argued that previous approaches from these traditions had been vague and had often denied agency to the actor (Billig, 1999).

Whilst Lacan (1988) draws on ideas aligned with some critical linguistics, this approach believes that language underpins all human unconsciousness. This strand of linguistics can be argued to fail to fully take into account the material effects of power and institutions, thus subsequently overemphasising subjectivity. Whilst subjects here are understood as interpellated by discourse through a range of subject positions in Lacanian approaches to the study of discourse, Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2002) argue that this theory overestimates the possibility of change because not all groups in society or individuals have equal opportunities to access or promote change. They further add that discourse does not solely emanate from discursive practices as Lacan argues but from structural relationships and conditions which can create dependency as well as limit social actors' possibilities. Imperative to CDA is the emphasis on a structural domain and analysis and Chouliaraki and Fairclough (2002) argue that there is a danger of under theorising social practices in this psychoanalytic Lacanian discourse analysis. As such, Lacan's (1988) integration of critical linguistics, used as a tool to determine and argue a fragmented self in the language of 'ego's' is considered here as a descriptive rather than explanatory discourse analytic method with a tendency to view the social actor as a passive agent affected by the signified and not the master of it. Assuming that there are

always two opposing concepts such as consciousness and the unconscious is to assume a particular discourse aligned with specific traditions in psychology, namely Freudian.

And so in my reflection, I consider a transcendental argument in the context of understanding the conscious and unconscious mind, which asserts that the unconscious can not necessarily be identified and linked to a particular universal dimension. Instead, the conscious and unconscious mind is considered able to synthesise information. This organisation involves putting representations together, one of which is through speech and grasping how this links to one's own knowledge (Kant, [1787] 2003). This means that this study assumes that social actors do know and are self-conscious about some things (Kant, [1787] 2003). This research adopts the position of Kant, in that there are two types of consciousness of self: consciousness of oneself in relation to psychological states and consciousness of one's states during the performance of acts (Kant [1787] 2003). Social actors here are assumed to have insight and ability to analyse their own psychological states, based on the principles of social work and its inherent relationship of reflective practice and anti-discriminatory concepts. Whilst choice of language might not be always be overtly conscious, it is the base of consciousness of the social actor and their psychological states, and shows how language and thought processes are inextricably linked influencing practice. As van Dijk (1999) points out in a conceptual triangle of society, discourse and social cognition, vocabulary and grammatical choices – which includes both conscious and unconscious choices – show how ideologies have cognitive dimensions that saturate individual's ideas and thoughts, as well as a social facet which involves the conscious performance of the social actor in wider social groups and society. For critical social work, it is important for social actors to recognise that their thoughts are saturated by ideological assumptions influencing practice. Some of these thoughts stemming from wider historical and ideological forces are riddled with taken for granted and common sense assumptions.

Another reflection on this chosen methodology is the complexity and language of a number of authors in this area which is often difficult to understand and sometimes

confusing. Some dimensions can be misinterpreted easily due to the technicality of concepts and the methodology is time consuming. Notwithstanding these criticisms, the choice of methodology in utilising an explanatory as well as descriptive discourse analytic method was considered paramount in this study to capture the 'whole' context of social work discourses.

Finally, a commentary is needed on the most difficult aspects of this chosen methodology. It has involved a complex working through and problem-solving process with regard to presenting data in a way that illuminates how the first stage of analysis was undertaken, but without overlapping to the discursive and social dimensions analysed in chapters four and five of this thesis. According to Breeze (2011), criticisms of Fairclough's three stage analysis include his inability to illustrate explicitly how his three stages were applied to his discussions. Breeze (2011) continues that his application of the three dimensional analysis is not presented explicitly or systematically, creating an impressionistic, rather literary, hermeneutic reading.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, the process of applying Fairclough's seven dimensions has involved analysing segments of text systematically, utilising Nvivo for the detailed micro-level analysis. This involved re-reading of transcripts and their segments, lifting out segments of texts and aligning them to the most appropriate data analysis units devised under the seven dimensional analysis. This was a process of constant analysis of data and aligning the theories underpinning Fairclough and CDA. In others words, there was constant movement in the analysis of data and theory until dominant themes emerged.

The textual analysis involves clustering and identifying discourse themes by analysing how the properties of the text communicate genres, styles and social (historical and ideological) practices in social work. In expanding the seven dimensions to their relationship with wider ideological, historical and social forces, the discourse themes were analysed and aligned to the micro-properties (seven dimensions) again. This fosters consistency and accuracy of the theories that underpin the seven dimensions, as well as ensuring a consistent and rigorous

method was applied. The following chapter explains and illustrates how the textual analysis was undertaken, and presents summary maps and diagrams to signpost to the reader how Fairclough's methodology was applied to this research.

## Chapter 3: Data Presentation

### Part 1: The Construction of Social Work (pre-socialisation)

#### 3.1 Introduction

This data presentation chapter has three parts and illuminates the thick description (Geertz, 1973) of social work. The thick description is considered a trustworthy method to provide adequate description of accounts in qualitative research. It presents the construction (experiential) and evaluation (relational and expressive values) given to the social work identity/role during social processes of identification (socialisation) by the social actor. What this means is that the social actor constructed social work in particular ways (both prior to and following socialisation) in the construction of help, and included what this was considered to involve with service users. The sample was coded as follows and those marked with \* indicate the gender of male.

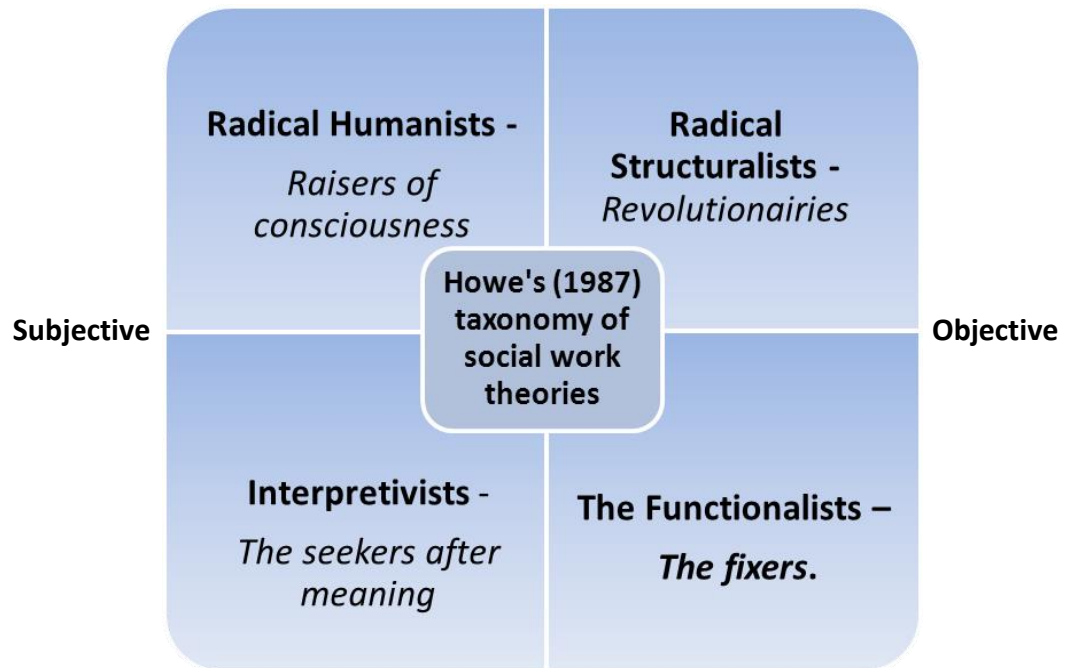
Year 1			Year 2					Year 3		Qualified	
P	J	S*	K	KL	R*	H	J2	A*	S3	QP*	QS

Data illuminates throughout how discourse themes were arrived at and how these are further analysed and explained (in the way of the discussion) in chapters four and five of this thesis. Initially then, data presentation illuminates the styles (identities) of social work (e.g. clinical social work) and subsequent ways of interacting (genres) within social work. These styles (drawn from the analysis of word and verb choices) were mapped in this thesis to practice paradigms in social work, utilising Howe's (1987) taxonomy of social work theories. Whilst this taxonomy can be considered as dated, it was a useful starting point to analysing how social work was understood by respondents in this study. The following diagram illustrates how paradigms for practice are differentiated and named by Howe (1987); they are divided into two dimensions, but within four paradigms for social work practice. They illustrate whether people's problems within society are



analysed and understood objectively and/or subjectively. Each of these paradigms is further explained in subsequent chapters. Here, this can be viewed as an identity map showing which preferred paradigms (styles and genres) of social work are constructed by social actors. In other words, signs (words) and verb choices were mapped against knowledge formations and discourses of social work theories.

### The Sociology of Radical Change



### The Sociology of Regulation

(Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p.27; Howe, 1987, p.47)

The following discourse themes (11 in total) were devised from this analysis and are coded as follows. Part one of the data presentation focuses on the following discourse themes:

1. Support work and casework (as one-to-one work) (DT1).
2. The Fixers (DT2).
3. Clinical social work (DT3).
4. Radical social work (DT4).
5. Help versus limitations (DT8).

In exploring how respondents understood the social work role and service user identity, part two focuses on the following discourse themes and were coded as:

6. Impersonalisation (DT5).
7. Self-help (DT6).
8. Helpless (DT7).
9. Make a difference (DT9).
10. Less fortunate (DT10).
11. Change (DT11).

This demonstrates how the discourse themes are clustered into two main categories in part one of this chapter. Each discourse theme presented was arrived at by utilising the textual (seven dimensions) analysis (words, verbs, pronouns and metaphors). The following map illuminates how and in what way discourse themes have been analysed and clustered into two categories.

### 3.2 Identities in Social Work: Extending the micro-analysis to the macro (discursive and social practices)

#### Part one: Understanding social work and what they do (pre-socialisation)

Discourse theme mapped to styles and genres (discursive practices) in social work.

*(through analysing words and verb choices)*



The Fixers (DT2).

Clinical social work (DT3).

Radical social work (DT4).

Help versus limitations (DT8).



How these styles and genres link to wider historical and ideological contexts of social work (social practices) as orders of discourse.

*(intertextuality and coherence)*

#### Order of Discourse:

Casework (DT1) & The Fixers (DT2).

#### Part two: Presenting the social work and service user identity (pre-socialisation)

Discourse theme mapped to styles and genres (discursive practices) in social work.

*(through analysing verb, word, pronoun & metaphor)*



Self-help (DT6).

Helpless (DT7).

Change (DT11).

Make a difference (DT9).



How these styles and genres link to wider historical and ideological contexts of social work (social practices) as orders of discourse.

*(intertextuality and coherence).*

#### Order of Discourse:

Impersonalisation (DT5) & Less fortunate (DT10).

Part one is centred on the word ‘help’, which was used consistently by social actors in their accounts surrounding the construction of social work. This word expressed a range of concepts interrelated with the wider caring enterprise, and like a map represented the most common ideas associated with the profession. Words that were not deployed by social actors, however, are analysed in subsequent chapters. The following words were the most commonly used throughout the sample and are ranked in order of most usage.

1. Help/helping	2. Supporting	3. Care	4. Enable
5. Needs	6. Community	7. Change	8. Working with

In critically analysing and explaining discourses, data presentation not only focuses on illuminating how the micro-analysis (word, verb, pronoun, metaphor) was undertaken but aims to demonstrate how each discourse theme was arrived at. These were identified and analysed against wider cultural (discursive) and social (historical and ideological) practices in social work, showing how coherence and intertextuality (in the seven dimensional textual analysis) were utilised.

Each section of data presentation should be viewed in conjunction with the summary maps presented in each of its main parts. These explain how this thesis is structured as well as illustrating how the two remaining dimensions of Fairclough’s (1992) CDA methodology are applied. These maps further illuminate what topics are analysed (in the way of discussion) in chapters four and five.

Each data set is presented in table form showing how quotes are annotated in particular ways (e.g. word choices outlined in bold text throughout) drawing the reader’s attention to ‘how’ the micro-analysis was undertaken. A short descriptive commentary is also included to illuminate how the micro-analysis communicates a particular set of styles (identities) of social work as well as its interactions (roles). To re-iterate, these short descriptive commentaries signpost how the data analysis was extended to a further two levels utilising Fairclough’s (1992) method of CDA.



### 3.3. Chapter 3, Part 1: Styles and Genres of Social Work (Discursive and Social Practices)

The following data presents the styles and genres of social work (DT2, 3, 4, 8) and concludes with the main order of social work practice (DT1).  
*Discourse Topic 2*

<b>The Fixers (DT2)</b>	<b>Data presentation explanation:</b> key words outlined in bold text and verbs outlined in single quotations.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	Word choices in these accounts indicated levels of authority (genres and styles) in the context of help. They signified specific knowledge formations derived from psycho-social social work or 'The Fixers'. The Fixers focus on the maintenance of society, crisis management, 'problem families' and restoring equilibrium. This paradigm for practice is based on behavioural and psycho-social theories. The range of verbs described (material) illustrated how the role (doing) in social work had been interpreted and were aligned (in this research) with discourses that contained language from 'The Fixers' paradigm (intertextuality). These concrete actions (through the use of verbs) provided insight into how the social actor had constructed social work as providing, supporting, finding and enabling which was viewed to have a material consequence (effect) on the service user. This speaks of the identities ascribed to both sets of actors alongside the ideologies underpinning the notion of task-centred practice (coherence).
<b>P</b>	<i>'provide' for them better...not 'provide' them better but just so they all 'rub' along a bit better. Perhaps the standard of living that has been provided could be 'sorted' out and such like.</i>
<b>S*</b>	<i>You know, 'help' when they reach a crisis point you 'intervene' at crucial points in people's lives.</i>
<b>K</b>	<i>it's 'trying' to 'keep' families together, 'support' things and 'place' to 'support' them and... it was a lot to 'do' with 'taking' them – 'put' them in the care system.</i>
<b>R*</b>	<i>'taking' information from whomever needed assistance or whatever and 'finding' things out for people at difficult times.</i>
<b>J2</b>	<i>'Doing' very positive things for people to 'enable' them to progress with their lives.</i>
<b>QS</b>	<i>Supporting people in times of crisis or need. Yeah, 'helping' people.</i>

### Discourse Topic 3

<b>Clinical Social Work (DT3)</b>	<b>Data presentation explanation:</b> key words outlined in bold text and verbs outlined in single quotations.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	Reflecting a particular set of ideas surrounding social work and help (coherence and intertextuality), these accounts indicated levels of authority and these word choices were aligned to the 'forensic gaze' of social work or clinical social work (intertextuality). This again is consistent with a pragmatic and 'fixers' approach to social work. These reflected a way of depicting how the social relationship between the social worker and service user was constructed within notions of needing expert 'help'.
<p><b>J</b>     ...<b>'applies'</b> the treatment, social work was for <u>me</u> more like a medical professional <b>'prescribing'</b> the treatment. They do <b>'apply'</b> engagement rules within the intervention...depending on, you know, what you want to <b>'use'</b>.</p> <p><b>P</b>     You can still <b>'catch'</b> them in time to <b>'change'</b> the cognitive processes [children].</p>	

#### Discourse Topic 4

Radical Social Work (DT4)	<b>Data presentation explanation:</b> key words outlined in bold text and verbs outlined in single quotations.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	Words like advocacy and fight were aligned with discourses of radical social work in the context of help (coherence and intertextuality). Out of twelve respondents, these ideas were marginalised with only S* asserting (in year one and prior to local authority placements) that social work and its identity encompassed ideas that can be related to social justice. Drawn from more immediate social contexts, this social actor's father was a practising social worker and had trained during the 1970s. Notwithstanding this backdrop, this social actor appeared to seek a particular identity during social processes of identification (radical) of social work.
S*	<p><i>I would put forward a strong case for the <b>advocacy</b> because obviously <b>we need to 'fight'</b>. And that's another thing it might be <b>helping but we also have to 'fight'</b> as a social worker...and you've always 'got' to '<b>advocate</b>'</i></p> <p><i>You '<b>do</b>' the '<b>bidding</b>' of the state, but you also '<b>fight</b>' the state so you're in a weird position really because you're not with the state, but you are with the state. As I '<b>said</b>' before, you're handcuffed by the state. And you've always got to '<b>advocate</b>' on – you've always got to '<b>look</b>' at the services and what would be best for them and obviously with their opinion and their input and you '<b>fight</b>' against the powers at bay to '<b>make</b>' a difference in their lives and that's how I '<b>see</b>' it.</i></p>



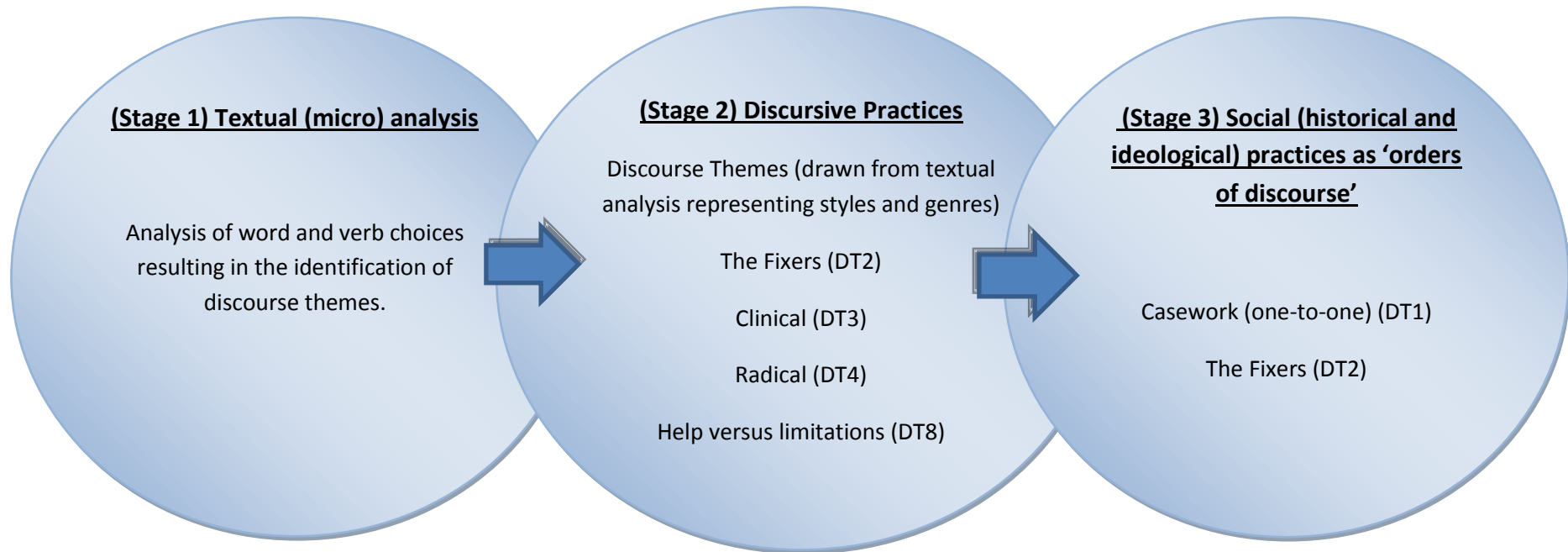
## Discourse Topic 8

<b>Help Versus Limitations (DT8)</b>	<b>Data presentation explanation:</b> key words outlined in bold text and verbs outlined in single quotations.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	Structural (binary) oppositions were deployed in a particular way in the 'help versus limitations' accounts. These showed classes of concepts in the way of binary oppositions as well as text structures (where one thing was seen to exist in relation to another - help alongside state limitations). This also illuminated a particular assumption and construction of help. The presupposition of the account of S* assumes a taken for granted that the state poses limitations so you have to 'fight' as a social worker. These ways of speaking were linked to wider pre-determined and reconstituted texts both reflecting organisational cultures and the socio-political and ideological (neo-liberalism) context of social work.
<b>S*</b>	<i>It was all about holding a pair of strings and your serving up the state at the end of the day and so you are <b>'helping' within the constraints of the structural sort of..</b>"</i>
<b>J</b>	<i>I also realise all about <b>constraints</b>, and sometimes it's not exactly what we'd like to 'do'. You <b>'operate' within certain limitations</b>, so it is <b>not always about, yes I 'help' you...</b>"</i>
<b>QS</b>	<i>I did not 'understand' any of the <b>wider implications</b> any of the - I 'suppose', what would you 'call' it? The barriers, not barriers but the <b>restrictions</b> 'put' on by like, <b>organisational structures</b>, I didn't really 'understand' the Government impact.</i>

### Discourse Topic 1

<b>Casework (DT1)</b>	<b>Data presentation explanation:</b> key words outlined in bold text and verbs outlined in single quotations.
<b>Summary (order of discourse)</b>	This discourse theme was aligned with wider genres (ways of talking and acting) in care work and aligned with wider social discourses of casework (intertextuality). The word choices showed how the basic ideas aligned to social work represented the social and natural world they were part of. These experiential values reflected the more immediate personal and cultural socialisation processes of the social actor. Also matching the authors' motivation, these signified a range of ideas and reflected the interests of the social actor's personal identity. Notwithstanding this, these words also revealed a predominance of ideas drawn from the range of pre-determined language and knowledge formations of what constitutes social care/work
<b>P</b>	<i>Well, if <b>life has gone a bit awry</b>, to <b>help</b> somebody <b>get their life back on track</b>.</i>
<b>KL</b>	<i>Finding them <b>help</b> and <b>aid</b>, in order to <b>make them live more independently</b>.</i>
<b>H</b>	<i>... doing <b>one-to-one work</b> with them and <b>being by their side</b>.</i>
<b>QS</b>	<i>..<b>helping</b> them on a <b>one- to-one</b> basis.</i>
<b>R*</b>	<i><b>being with them</b> and working with them in a <b>one- to- one</b> way.</i>
<b>A*</b>	<i>I wanted to be able to <b>work with people on a one-to- one</b> and <b>make things happen for people really</b>.</i>
<b>S*</b>	<i><b>Well you argue the case</b> and obviously <b>look at the case in an individualistic way</b>.</i>

## Visual summary of CDA method and application of part one (data presentation, chapter 3)



### Further explanation:

**Stage 1 Textual analysis:** presented in 'data presentation' (chapter 3) evidencing discourse themes drawn from the micro-analysis.

**Stage 2 Discursive (cultural) practices:** presented in chapter four extending the micro to wider knowledge formations and cultural practices.

**Stage 3 Social practices as orders of discourse:** presented and integrated in the discussion in chapter four.

### 3.4a Chapter 3, Part 2: Presenting the Social Worker and Service User

#### Discourse Topic 6

<b>Self-help (DT6)</b>	<b>Data presentation explanation:</b> key words outlined in bold text and verbs outlined in single quotations. The use of pronouns is underlined.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	Pre-supposition in these accounts showed how the social actor implied a specific meaning in the text in relation to service users. The word, pronouns and verb choices communicates a specific identity of the SU in the context of self-help and reflects the power assumed and embedded in the context of the helping relationships (wider genres). This was because the use of words and verb choices implied that service users in doing things 'for' and who are <b>not able</b> are thus <b>unable</b> (dialectical opposite) and so powerless. This evaluative stance illuminated the assumed identity of the SW in the (inter-) actions depicted. The social worker was presented as a social actor that is always 'helpful'.
<p><b>P</b>     <i><u>You</u> need to 'encourage' <u>them</u> to 'do' for themselves.</i></p> <p><b>J2</b>     <i>You 'help' them 'identify' <u>their</u> needs and how they could be 'addressed'.</i></p> <p><b>S*</b>     <i>'Intervene' at crucial points in people's lives.</i></p> <p><b>S3</b>     <i>...just 'get' people to where <u>they</u> 'want' to 'be'.</i></p> <p><b>QP</b>     <i>'help' people who needed 'help' and were <b>not able to do it <u>themselves</u></b> and were being <b>side tracked</b> by everybody.</i></p>	

## Discourse Topic 7

<b>Helpless (DT7)</b>	<b>Data presentation explanation:</b> key words outlined in bold text and verbs outlined in single quotations. The use of pronouns is underlined.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	Pre-supposition in the accounts here show the social actor implied a specific meaning in the text in relation to service users. Presented as 'helpless', this stable taken for granted assumed an identity of the SU and reflected where the power was deemed to lie in the social work relationship. This was because the use of words and verb choices implied that service user's in doing things 'for' and who are <b>not able</b> are thus <b>unable</b> and so powerless.
<p><b>S*</b>     ...and <u>you've</u> always <b>got to advocate</b>.</p> <p><b>H</b>     <u>You</u> <b>have to be by their side and help them</b> get to where should be.</p> <p><b>J2</b>     ...actually doing very <b>positive things for people</b> to help and <b>enable them</b> to progress with their lives.</p> <p><b>QP*</b>   What <u>I</u> saw in social work which <u>I</u> related to was having time to help people who needed help were <b>not able to do it themselves</b> and were being side tracked by everybody.</p> <p><b>QS</b>    <u>I</u> really loved the idea that social workers were doing positive things for people.</p>	

## Discourse Topic 10

<b>Less Fortunate (DT10)</b>	<b>Data presentation explanation:</b> key words outlined in bold text and verbs outlined in single quotations. The use of pronouns is underlined.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	Classification of service users' in the following accounts manifests itself in the text as objectification. This is where identity is ascribed in such a way as to reduce service users to specific features such as <b>less fortunate</b> , in a <b>worse situation</b> or age. Whilst there are more accounts similar to this, these words below and use of pronouns were linked to past texts and genres of the poor (intertextuality). There was an assumed taken for granted that SU were less fortunate (pre-supposition). It also showed the social actors commitment what was said as in 'I prefer if I where this authority and use of pronoun (cohesion) spoke of the identities ascribed of both sets of social actors (SW and SU).
<p><b>S*</b>     <i>Well [help] is a word and helping any way <u>I</u> can <b>because those people are less fortunate than myself</b></i></p> <p><b>J2 ...</b>     <i>this <b>old lady</b> just wanted to talk...</i></p> <p><b>H</b>     <i>You know, <b>people who are poor and then you have to consider the child.</b></i></p> <p><b>R*</b>     <i>I was with <b>people who had difficulty communicating</b> and was on my own <b>so I had to think how to communicate to them as they might not understand.</b></i></p> <p><b>QP*</b>     <i>help people who needed help were <b>not able to do it <u>themselves.</u></b></i></p>	

## Discourse Topic 11

<b>Change (DT11)</b>	<b>Data presentation explanation:</b> key words outlined in bold text and verbs outlined in single quotations.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	The word choices, alongside material processes of 'doing' in the context of change implied a particular meaning in the social work relationship. With a taken for granted that some service users' were depicted as not or can't change/be helped (presupposition), these words and grammatical choices were aligned with the backdrop of ideological connotations of notions of 'self-help' (coherence). Furthermore, one social actor implied that a 'good' social worker was one that can actually change lives.
<b>J</b>	<i>...a <b>good social worker</b> can actually '<b>change</b>' <b>their life</b> for young people.</i>
<b>QS</b>	<i><b>Some people</b> don't want to '<b>change</b>' or might <b>not be 'able'</b> to '<b>change</b>' or society might '<b>keep</b>' them <b>there</b> even if we want them to '<b>change</b>' or '<b>support</b>' them 'to' '<b>change</b>.'</i>
<b>S*</b>	<i>Sometimes people '<b>need</b>' '<b>help</b>' when they <b>don't 'want</b>' '<b>help</b>' but that we '<b>reflect</b>' on the '<b>help</b>' that's being '<b>given</b>' 'to' them morally and then they may '<b>come</b>' around or may not.</i>

### Discourse Topic 9

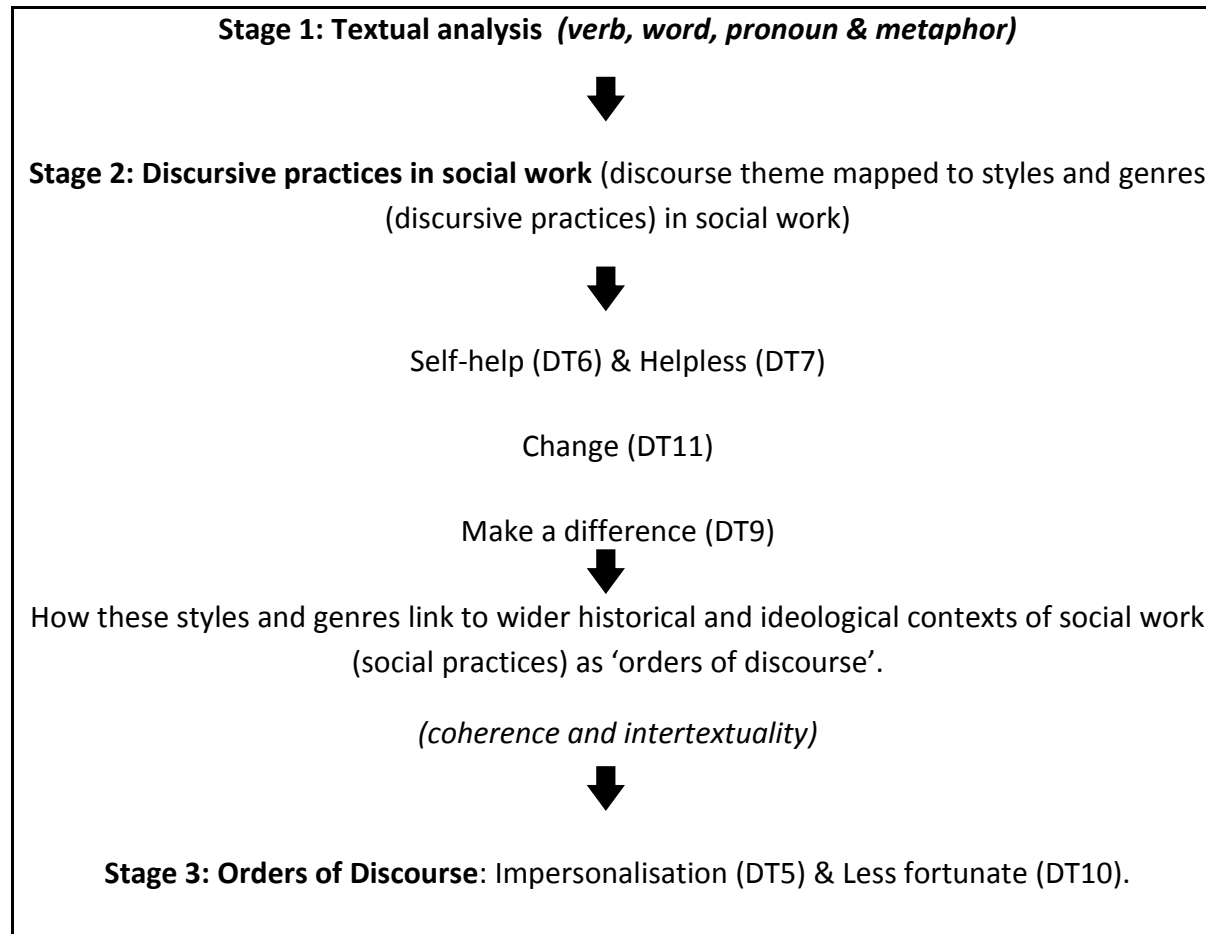
<b>Make a Difference (DT9)</b>	<b>Data presentation explanation:</b> key words outlined in bold text and verbs outlined in single quotations. The use of pronouns is underlined.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres).</b>	The patterns of speaking showed how the concept of 'help' was described through the deployment of a metaphor. It was cognised by the social actor in such a way as to imply that to 'assist' or 'support' on the 'whole' were assumed as ingredients that can 'make a difference' to someone's life (coherence). This conceptual domain of making a difference expresses the thoughts of the social actor and how help was viewed in relation to a particular concept. These metaphors illuminate the cognitive and emotional investment (personal identities in the use of 'I') that social actors employed during social processes of identification. There is also the presupposition inherent within this metaphor that social workers can always make a difference.
<b>S*</b>	<i><u>I</u>'chose' social work is because <u>I</u>'wanted' to <b>make' a difference</b> and 'help' people.</i>
<b>P</b>	<i>because <u>I</u> wanted to <b>make' a difference</b> for their adult lives in terms of how they might end up.</i>
<b>K</b>	<i><u>I</u>'wanted' to 'put' something <b>back into the system to 'make' a difference.</b></i>
<b>R*</b>	<i><u>I</u>'think' more about '<b>assisting' people, 'helping' and 'making' a difference,</b> that type of thing.</i>



### Discourse Topic 5

<b>Impersonalisation (DT5)</b>	<b>Data presentation explanation:</b> key words outlined in bold text, verbs outlined in single quotations and pronouns underlined.
<b>Summary (order of discourse)</b>	The use of <u>them</u> throughout the majority of texts showed how service users were represented not as a particular person but as a whole problematic and depersonalised entity that required something in the way of help. These representational strategies in language showed how there is no neutral way in which to represent a person. They highlighted certain aspects of identity which were not expressed explicitly but implicitly showed a set of ideas and values (experiential and relational values). It is not until year three that student social workers begin to use the term service user to replace <u>them</u> . It is debatable which term is more depersonalised than the other and shows the effects of language in working in social care professions.
<b>P</b>	<b><i>Working with families to enable <u>them</u> to keep <u>their</u> children and to <u>provide for them</u>.</i></b>
<b>J2</b>	<b><i>Doing very positive things for people to enable <u>them</u> to 'progress' with <u>their</u> lives.</i></b>
<b>H</b>	<b><i><u>I</u> have a bit more power. <u>I</u> suppose to...<u>you</u> know, to 'help' <u>them</u>.</i></b>

### 3.4b Chapter 3, Part 2: Summary Diagram (Service User and Social Work Identity)



### **3.5 The Construction of Social Work (post-socialisation)**

Part three tells a story of how learners and qualified social workers (from year two onwards) experienced local authority social work in Wales. The accounts are contextualised within the following policy frameworks: the Care Programme Approach (CPA); learning difficulties (Unified Assessment/Care Co-ordination); hospital discharge pilot schemes (Services for Older People) and Care Management (Unified Assessment, 2002). This chapter presents data in a way that illuminates what is discussed and analysed in chapter five, which evidences how the broader analysis of Fairclough's (1992) method was applied following a detailed textual analysis.

This research argues that the overall text structure of the accounts directly relates to organisational discourses and discursive practices inherent within state social work cultures. In the management of bureau-professional regimes, these accounts provide the 'thick description' of social work in its wider neo-liberalist context. Showing the ideological and dialectical effects of these discursive practices on the becoming subject (student and qualified social workers), not only do these represent a range of wider cultural and occupational processes of distribution, consumption and reconstitution (discursive practices), but they influence how the social actor constructs and makes sense of social work. The following discourse themes were identified and coded from the micro-textual analysis:

### **3.6 Discourse Topics Drawn from Seven Dimensions of Analysis**

1. Managing the Ideological and Cultural Struggle (DT1).
2. Bureau-Professional Frameworks (DT2).
3. Care Programme Approach versus Care Management (DT3).
4. Medical versus Social (DT4).
5. Clinical or Therapeutic Social Work (DT5).
6. Just Like a Revolving Door (DT6).
7. Put Up or Shut Up (DT7).
8. Change (DT8).
9. Fighting Back (DT9)

10. Good and Bad Social Work (A and B) (DT10)

11. Contradictions in the Narrative Plot (DT11).

DT1 is identified as the order of discourse in contemporary adult social work and is part of the overall narrative (text structure) of the accounts presented in this part of the chapter. The narrative (text structure) represents dominant social practices in local authority cultures. Presented as single data sets here only, chapter five analyses the discourse themes in a particular way (see diagram 2 below). The single data sets are presented in the same order as the discussion in chapter 5 which extends the micro analysis to discursive and social practices showing more of a top-down analysis of the overall narrative structure presented.

### 3.7 Diagram 2: Text structure and discourses (post-socialisation)

**Stage 3:** Order of discourse 'The Ideological and Cultural Struggle' DT1:  
(Social work accounts in their wider social, historical and ideological context:  
provides the framework and context for the following sub-themes).



**Stage 2: Discursive practices: subject positions, genres and metaphors  
in the narrative)**

Bureau Professional Frameworks (DT2),  
Medical Versus Social (DT4).  
Clinical or Therapeutic Social Work (DT5).  
Just Like a Revolving Door (DT9)  
Put Up and Shut Up (DT3)  
Change (DT8)



Contradictions in the narrative plot (DT11) Fighting Back (DT9)



Good and Bad Social Work (DT10 a & b)



**Stage 1: discourse themes derived from textual analysis (seven dimensions).**  
*(pronoun, words, verbs, metaphor/rhetoric, text structure).*

Like a map, the following table captures the most commonly used words to describe social work (post-socialisation). It represents the most common ideas (constructs/ concepts) associated with social work, and also represents a range of reconstituted discursive and ideological (social) practices drawn from more immediate cultures in social work.

Word Choices/ Recurring and most frequently deployed.
1. Shock
2. Bored
3. Paper work
4. Control
5. Tick boxes
6. Bureaucracy
7. Stress
8. Frustration

### Chapter 3, Part 3: 'The Problem-Saturated Story' of Social Work (post-socialisation)

#### Discourse Topic 1

<b>The Ideological and Cultural Struggle (DT1)</b>	<b>Description (explanation):</b> Word choices show how over persuasion is used throughout these accounts by the use of 'very'. This signals the social actor's firm commitment to the topic described. Words are outlined in bold text, verbs outlined in single quotations. Pronouns are underlined.
<b>Summary: (Order of Discourse)</b>	Linked to the ideological and cultural climate of social work practice (through the analysis of word and verb choices deployed), this data captured the evaluative stance adopted by the social actor of the social work identity and role (post-socialisation). The following existential and material processes (see Appendix H) were aligned with reconstituted ways of talking (coherence and intertextuality). Whilst these accounts sound highly plausible given the neo-liberalist context of social work, they also encompass the voices of others drawn from social work cultures (discursive practices). These ways of talking are saturated in social work literature almost to the point that discourse has presupposition properties. This is because these discourses have become the taken for granted in social work culture which is assumed as a restricted and controlled activity (intertextuality).
<b>J2</b>	<i>It was a <b>very</b> – yeah, <b>bureaucratic</b> culture. It was <b>rules, regulations, decisions made for you</b>, you had the <b>team meetings but they were a complete 'waste' of time</b>. The amount of <b>form-'filling'</b> and <b>computer</b> 'work' that you 'had' to 'do'..yeah, just the amount of '<b>writing</b>' and the jargon, and everything you 'had' to 'wade' through was a <b>shock to <u>me</u></b> I 'found' it <b>overwhelming</b>. All the <b>policies and legislation</b> that 'guide' it.</i>
<b>H</b>	<i><b>Very power- driven</b>, I 'suppose'; if you don't 'sort' of '<b>conform</b>' to what you 'know', what the policies and their procedures 'say' then...I 'suppose' you 'have' a problem.</i>
<b>A*</b>	<i>It's a <b>top- down bureaucratic perspective</b> really...I 'found' it was '<b>controlled</b>', managerially '<b>controlled</b>', and it was in that framework [care management].</i>

## Discourse Topic 2

<b>Bureau-professional Frameworks (DT2)</b>	<b>Description (explanation):</b> Word choices show how over persuasion is used throughout these accounts by the use of very, showing the actor's firm commitment to the concept described. Words are outlined in bold and verbs outlined in single quotations.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	In the management of a range of bureau-professional frameworks (Person-Centred, Unified Assessment and Care Management/Co-ordination), these accounts illustrated how assessment frameworks might have conflicted with the social actor's original construction of social work. It also signified the more favoured characterises and attributes of the identity of social work drawn from wider policy rhetoric.
<p><b>A*</b>    <i>You're not able <b>to 'build' relationships with the service users effectively.</b></i></p> <p><b>KL</b>    <i>But I just 'felt' like "What is going on?" I <b>'thought' it is supposed to be person-centred</b> and I 'think' I was 'basing' all my approach on that and the more I was 'doing' that, the more <b>I was 'fighting' against it.</b></i></p> <p><b>H</b>    <i>Well after being there, I 'felt' as <b>if frustration 'took' over</b> because most of it was just basically' <b>typing' away on a computer and 'doing' the assessments</b> to 'go' to the panel.</i></p> <p><b>K</b>    <i><b>'Get' all the boxes 'ticked'.</b></i></p> <p><b>QS</b>    <i>You just <b>'feel' like you're an administrator</b> and also you' <b>feel' very much like everything's your responsibility.</b></i></p>	



### Discourse Topic 3

<b>CPA versus Care Management (DT3)</b>	<b>Description (explanation):</b> Word choices are outlined in bold and verbs outlined in single quotations and pronouns underlined.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	Two social actors showed how the Care Program Approach (CPA) was viewed favourably in comparison to Care Management. These evaluations were based on the experiences of adult (social work) practice settings. The verbs deployed by the social actors indicated the more favoured processes of 'doing'. These were based on the autonomy to <b>'write' in person</b> and <b>'get' out there</b> instead of <b>'ticking' boxes</b> . This is because these accounts show the more favoured roles of social work, one being to have <b>more time with</b> service users. The use of pronouns such as 'we' also was used to infer better team cultures in their evaluations of practice.
<p><b>A*</b> <i>It's a little bit less <b>bureaucratical</b> [CPA] than the care management perspective. It's less rigid and <u>they</u> 'give' you <b>more time with service users</b>. To me, it wasn't as reactive social work really because often you'd 'have' a <b>unified assessment framework, which is a 50-page document in care management</b>. That compared to the CPA is – it is dramatic really that <u>you</u> have <b>'ticked' boxes</b> and then <u>you</u> 'have' phrases to <b>'put' in each of the boxes on the care management</b>. With the CPA, you can <b>just 'write' in person</b>. <b>The one thing I found – one of main benefits about 'working' with Drugs and Alcohol and mental health than care management</b> was that everything is <b>handwritten</b>. <b>It's more creative</b>.</i></p> <p><b>QS</b> <i>I 'think' even within that culture <u>they</u> <b>'fight' against it more [mental health teams]</b>. <u>They</u> don't just 'accept' that that <b>paperwork is 'coming' in</b>, it's like why and what's the best way <u>we</u> can 'do' that and <b>very collectively</b>, and not just social work, very multidisciplinary collectively, <u>we</u> 'work' together to 'make' that <b>paperwork the easiest</b> so <b>we can 'get' out there and 'be' with clients</b>.</i></p>	

#### Discourse Topic 4

<b>Medical Versus Social (DT4)</b>	<b>Description (explanation):</b> Word choices are outlined in bold text.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	An alternative construction of social and health working together collectively is given in these accounts. Social actors draw on structural oppositions and wider genres of the medical versus social model (coherence and intertextuality). Assumed as problematic - as if they are two opposing entities - the relational and expressive values in the text show how the social actor aligns ideas of applying a 'social model' to successful social work. Concepts of social work are deployed here in binary opposite ways. This can signify wider cultural practices and professional identity conflicts (see appendix F).
<p><b>QS</b> <i>Because you had like community psychiatric nurses there, it was <b>more the medical model</b>. Everything - I 'felt' that was more dominant. You had the psychiatrist there, and a lot of it I 'struggled' with in the beginning because it was <b>all about medication</b>. And I felt <b>social needs came just under</b>, you know, it was all about medication and 'trying' to get my head around that was quite difficult.</i></p> <p><b>A*</b> <i>Because often a lot of the time - I found some of the time when I was on placement [hospital re-ablement/care management/unified assessment], the social worker would 'look' at more <b>the medical side instead of 'looking' at the social elements</b> and often it was a lot of the services user didn't 'want' to 'be' 'on' the medication, but they didn't have anything else so.</i></p>	

### Discourse Topic 5

<b>Clinical or Therapeutic Social Work? (DT5)</b>	<b>Description (explanation):</b> Word choices are outlined in bold text.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	Earlier accounts showed how two year 1 students constructed social work in the context of treatment or therapy. Whilst one account alludes to changing cognitive processes and could be aligned specifically with therapy discourses, the language of J such as 'operate', 'intervene' and 'treatment' pointed towards a favoured style (identity) of social work. These wider clinical discourses can be firmly aligned with the dominant ideological forces of 'evidence-based' social work (coherence and intertextuality).
<b>QS</b>	<i>It almost feels more therapeutic. It's like a mixture of almost like a counselling session with a <b>CBT</b> session mixed in.</i>
<b>A *</b>	<i>Well, to me you can work again very closely with the psychologist, the clinical psychologist, from a <b>therapeutic perspective</b>. I chose mental health because I want to go into a bit more of the <b>counselling element</b> of that I think at some stage and I think this is creative</i>

## Discourse Topic 8

<b>Change (DT8)</b>	<b>Description (explanation):</b> Word choices are outlined in bold and verbs outlined in single quotations. The uses of pronouns are shown through underlined text.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	Change as a word and verb choice was a concept that was used in a different context compared with how this was used previously in data (see part one of this chapter). Earlier, change was deployed as a characteristic and role of the ‘good’ social worker. Here it shows the subject positions of the social actor illuminating how change was understood in contemporary social work. QP*’s account captured how other social workers had also spoken about change.
<b>S3</b>	<i>But that's the way I've always been and deep down I would like to change that, <b>but it's like how would' I 'change' that?</b></i>
<b>QS</b>	<i>Really negative, as in almost what's the point? <b>There is no point because you can't 'change' anything.</b></i>
<b>QP*</b>	<i>'Let' it 'go'. You're <b>not 'going' to 'change' anything</b></i>

## Discourse Topics 6 & 7

<b>Just Like a Revolving Door (DT6) and Put Up and Shut Up (DT7).</b>	<b>Description (explanation):</b> Metaphors are outlined in bold text.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	The fast pace and wider ideological context of social work was described through the use of metaphor mainly. This showed how the social actor cognises their experiences in relation to social work casework. It showed how the social actor used the metaphor to describe local authority social work and illuminated the relational values of the social actor and illustrates what subject positions were adopted within the overall narrative.
<p> <b>KL</b>    <i>...I did not realise it was as much time spent in the office really. <b>It was like a revolving door.</b></i> </p> <p> <b>S3</b>    <i>It's just <b>like a revolving door.</b></i> </p> <p> <b>KL</b>    <i>It was a lot more easier to...if the saying is, <b>put up and shut up</b>, basically</i> </p> <p> <b>S3</b>    <i>Like I'm pretty laid back, so I'd sort of probably <b>sit back and go with it,</b></i> </p> <p> <b>K</b>    <i>I just <b>kept my head down</b></i> </p> <p> <b>QP *</b>    <i>You've got to choose when you <b>fight a battle.</b> Maybe the longer you are qualified, you do <b>make trade-offs.</b> You don't like to admit that you've <b>let something go</b> that you should not have, but I think at times you do.</i> </p>	

## Discourse Topic 11

<b>Contradictions to the Dominant Plot (DT11)</b>	<b>Description (explanation):</b> Word choices are outlined in bold, verbs are outlined in single quotations and pronouns in underlined text.
<b>Summary: (styles, subject positions and genres)</b>	Linked to text structures in accounts in narrative analysis, there is always a dominant plot and range of sub-themes. These can often show contradictions in the structure of the account and are the more marginalised and contradictory discourses within the overall narrative structure. Whereas H felt like banging her head against a brick wall in state social work, at other moments she had enjoyed assessment work. Similarly whilst J2 noted how the culture ‘moaned’, she too adopts the same discourse showing the power of discursive practices at work.
<p><b>H</b>     <i>An assessment to ‘do’ and then <u>I</u> did a little bit of that. And <u>I</u> ‘went’ and ‘did’ a couple of ‘support’ visits and <b>every time I ‘went’ and did something like that, it would ‘bring’ me back up on a high.</b> Because <u>I</u>...<b>the assessment that I ‘did’</b>, I tried to ‘<b>build’ up a relationship with <u>them</u>.</b></i></p> <p><b>J2</b>     <i>...but <b>they</b> [other social workers] <b>used to ‘moan’ continuously about the administration side of things...</b></i>  <i>The amount of <b>form filling and computer work</b> <u>you</u> had to ‘do’, everything you had to ‘<b>wade’ through</b> was a shock to me; really <b>off-putting</b> actually.</i></p>	

# Discourse Topic 9

<b>Contradictions to the Dominant Plot as 'Fighting Back' (DT9)</b>	<b>Description (explanation):</b> Word choices are outlined in bold, verbs outlined in single quotations and pronouns are underlined.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres).</b>	Whilst change was viewed in a way which presented the social worker as the passive agent, the following accounts showed a contradiction to the dominant. Explicit actions are deployed by the social actor to challenge what was considered as bad practice. This represented the expressive, existential and relational values within the text. The interactions depicted show how these experiences created conflict with the social actor's professional and personal identity (styles).
<p><b>K</b>     <i>I 'did' actually 'approach' them and I 'explained' from <b>being previously a service user</b> that I <b>would have 'been' devastated</b> if I 'thought' that they were '<b>talking' about <u>me</u> behind my back</b> like that.</i></p> <p><b>QP*</b>    <i>...but I 'found' that <b>the antidote</b> to that was the law. If <b><u>you</u> 'said'</b>, "Well, that's all very well, but <b>the law 'says' and if <u>we</u> 'go' against, <u>you</u> could end up with a judicial review.</b>" <b><u>You</u> 'mention' judicial review and <u>they</u> panic.</b></i></p>	

Discourse Topic 10 a

<b>Good and Bad Social Work (DT10a)</b>	<b>Description (explanation):</b> Word choices are outlined in bold, verbs outlined in single quotations.
<b>Summary: (styles and genres)</b>	Word and verb choices inferred meaning that those social workers who had no commitment were viewed negatively. Relational values showed how social work theory was considered as not needed in the 'box ticking' climate of bureaucracy by other social workers. Showing resonance with wider genres of social work cultures (pre-determined texts and discursive practices), these accounts showed a favoured construction of the social work identity. These ways of presenting good and bad social work stem from the ideologies, values and ethics of social work practice and wider knowledge formations (intertextuality and coherence).
<b>J</b>	<i>They just 'did' what they 'had' to 'do'. There was <b>no commitment or real involvement</b>. I mean, one example was the manager 'trying' to 'get' volunteers to 'specialise' in a subject so they could be the 'lead' figure in that subject if anybody needed advice; nobody wanted to 'do' it at all. <b>Nobody was interested</b>. It was an <b>extra work-load</b> that they weren't 'prepared' to 'do'.</i>
<b>H</b>	<i>I got an advice by this person who was bored everyday 'saying' this, "I don't 'know' why <b>you bother him with this all theory and because when you are a social worker, all you do is 'tick' boxes and 'sit' behind a desk.</b></i>
<b>K</b>	<i>We <b>did a case 'discussion'</b> and it was <b>very much everyone 'giving' their personal opinions</b> because they've <b>known the family and known the parents</b>. It was all <b>very much personal and not professional opinions</b>.</i>



Discourse Topic 10 b

<b>Good and Bad Social Work: Case Genre (DT10b)</b>	<b>Description (explanation):</b> Word choices are outlined in bold and verbs outlined in single quotations
<b>Summary: (styles and genres).</b>	<p>Five respondents drew on case examples in the way of case talk (specific genre). These ways of acting in social work talk (in the form of narratives) manifested themselves in the way of providing examples of bad practice drawn from observations of occupational cultures. These observations had caused conflict with the social actor (narrator) and encompassed a range of ideational properties within the text (associated characterises, values and beliefs of social work). The full case genre has been removed to protect the identity of service users and those involved in the study. This includes protecting the identity of the local authority (where the social actors were placed or had worked) consistent with the ethical principles underpinning the study.</p>
<b>J2</b>	<p><i>Well, I 'went' on an assessment with one of the social workers, <b>and this old lady just 'wanted 'to 'talk'</b> and it was, "Okay, I have to 'go' now", [other social worker] because <u>she</u> 'knew' <b>she had to 'go' back</b> and she 'had' to – she was only a part-time and she 'had' to 'get' her <b>office work 'done'</b>.</i></p>
<b>K</b>	<p><i><b>There was a service user...[case genre removed].</b>when I've 'reflected' on it overnight I couldn't even 'sleep' and the next day I '<b>spoke</b>' to <u>her</u> and I '<b>said</b>' 'Are <u>we</u> gonna, like, 'speak' to the manager about this?</i></p>
<b>R*</b>	<p><i>There's one service user in particular. She'd been 'living' in community housing in a project for about 17-18 years and she 'expressed' her wishes in the last, I 'think' it's about two years now.<b>[case genre removed].</b> <u>She</u> [other social worker] <b>didn't want to 'change' things</b> either because things <b>were 'running' quite smoothly</b> as they were.</i></p>



### **3.8 Conclusion**

In part one, this chapter illustrated the application of the seven dimensions of textual analysis and identified the discourse topics (themes) that were drawn from the accounts. This set the scene for the further two layers of analysis utilising Fairclough's (1992) method. Through the analysis of the range of word and verb choices the accounts illuminated how the social work identity and role was constructed. Part two concluded with how social workers and services users were presented in the construction of the helping relationship.

The final data set illustrated how respondents constructed social work post-socialisation and these accounts showed resonance with wider literature in adult social work to date (evidenced in chapter five). Yet these pre-determined and reconstituted ways of understanding contemporary practice are considered to hinder social workers from thinking critically for themselves in the context of the power of structure upon agency. Data also illuminated contradictions in the overall narrative text structures, showing how some social actors might be more self-conscious than others in managing the tensions of the social work identity. The following chapters discuss each discourse theme in the context of discursive and social practices, and present a picture of what social work looks like pre- and post-socialisation. They do so by analysing the discourse topics/themes (in the way in which they have been categorised in this chapter). Whilst there appear to be many discourse themes, the chapters will present these in a way that provides sufficient depth to each one, by demonstrating their relationship to one another in the co-constructed narrative of contemporary social work.

## **Chapter 4, Part 1: The Construction of Social Work (pre-socialisation)**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Throughout this chapter, words or phrases that have single quotation marks ('quotes') in the general discussion such as 'treatment' are used to emphasise specific discourses. These are either deployed by the social actor or are words drawn from wider social work discourses (knowledge formations). Quotes are used throughout this chapter to further illuminate and support the discussion, demonstrating what is being analysed in the discourse theme discussed. Text highlighted in bold within the quotes emphasises the language (sign use/choice) of the social actor. Further single quotes that are applied within the social actor's accounts (quotes) illustrate what verbs are deployed. Finally, each discourse theme is identified as (DT) throughout this chapter.

To demonstrate all eleven themes (of part one of data presentation) as well as the application of Fairclough's Three Dimensional Model (discursive and social dimensions), this chapter has two parts and initially explores the 'styles' (personal and social identity) of social work that were drawn from the accounts of social actors (pre-socialisation of social work cultures). Styles are partly a matter of how social actors speak, write and present themselves physically (Fairclough, 2003). They are linked to social processes of identification and represent personal and social identities in the text (accounts). As Fairclough (2003) points out, "messages about personal and social identities are carried by the variable selections people make from words" (p.162).

These styles of social work were identified as: Casework (as one-to-one work), The Fixers (with a sub-theme of Clinical Social Work), Radical Structuralist, Radical Humanist and Constructivist Social Work (what is not said). In essence, this emphasised which processes of identifying social actors had drawn upon from their immediate and local social contexts. Inherently related to the world in which they are a part, they illuminated which construction of the social work identity had been

made, but also represented themselves (personal identity) as well as service users. This chapter critically deconstructs this by synthesising critical linguistic theories and critical theories inherent in CDA.

Whilst these styles interrelate with genres (ways of acting/roles in social work) and are partly as a result of their dialectical relationship to discursive and social practices, genres are identified in the context of grammatical properties within the text. A genre is defined as a “socially ratified way of using language in connection with a particular type of social activity” (Fairclough, 1995b, p.14). They encompass ways of (inter-) acting in social events and in analysing these, the researcher considers how each genre fits alongside other social (inter-) actions derived from wider social practices. They represent a particular way of acting (genre) such as a political manifesto or a casework account in social work. Communicating identities as well as genres, identity is thus viewed in this research as the reflexive enactment of roles in interactional terms (Goffman, 1959). These roles and identities are not regarded as fixed in social work, but as resources which actors draw on to carry out their role (McRobbie, 1994; Hall, 1997).

In focusing on both the social actor’s social and personal identity and its dialectical relationship through the identification and analysis of social work styles, this study embraces post-structuralist theory (Foucault, 1972; Burkitt, 1991; Fairclough, 1995; Machin and Mayr, 2012). This demonstrates how discourses are viewed as synonymous within social life and the principal element in the construction of social life (Burkitt, 1991). These inevitably link to wider discursive and social practices of power, knowledge and ideological/historical contexts. What is not said in the way of social work styles is also illuminated. This shows how certain orders of discourses present a particular construction of the social work identity.

Fairclough (2003) argues that orders of discourses are the particular combination of specific genres, discourses and styles. These constitute and signify an aspect of a network of social practices. For example in caring professions a set of genres which link to an externally set curriculum and ethical framework initiate which kinds of genres are expected. These orders of discourses in more general terms can be

viewed as a form of social structuring of languages which influences the agent's choice of language/action. That is not to say, however, that there are always a number of other possibilities within structuring conventions of language (Fairclough, 2003).

Genres as ways of (inter-) acting in social work are integrated at relevant parts throughout the chapter (the use of material verbs). This illustrates how each style was embedded with specific genres within social work. In essence these genres reflected how each actor 'performs' the social work role in their presentation of the 'professional' self. Running parallel with wider knowledge formations of a given time (which derive from powerful institutions in the real domain (Bhaskar, 1989), these infiltrate the subject in such a way (dialectically) that styles and genres determine how the agent responds to social work. Genres reflect the most dominant epistemè of a given time (most dominant knowledge frameworks and principles), and can be associated with specific orders of discourse in society. The following orders of discourse were drawn from the analysis of styles and genres (discursive practices) in social work. The chapter addresses these in the following order:

1. The Fixers (DT2) (sub theme of Clinical Social Work DT3).
2. Marginalised: The Radical Structuralists (DT4) (sub theme of Help versus Limitations (DT8).
3. What is not said: Radical Structuralism and the Interpretivists.
4. Casework and as 'one-to-one work (DT1) and the Fixers (DT2) – Order of discourse.

Part two of this chapter analyses how the presentation of service users is conveyed in accounts. It considers how the use of pronouns and verb choices include a range of pre-suppositions and assumptions within those accounts. These reflect wider discursive and social practices of the discourses surrounding the service user identity. These accounts illustrated how discourses were consumed, reconstituted and distributed throughout social practices. Paradoxically these discourses contain a

multitude of inherent contradictions in the texts, providing critical social work with opportunities to realign the power of language in the construction of the 'other'.

The discourse topic theme 'change' is also discussed here and showed what evaluative stance had been made by the social actor in the context of service user identity. Change was also used alongside the notion of what constituted the 'good' social worker and is returned to as a theme in chapter five. This showed how the use of the word changed in meaning post-socialisation. Both sets of data are related to wider discursive practices and orders of discourse in this chapter, by contextualising them in the historical and knowledge formations of social work and 'self-help' (intertextuality and coherence). These are ideologically saturated by wider identity formations of the 'service user', showing how the personal is always political. As Kitzinger (1994) points out:

Identities are not freely created products of introspection, or the unproblematic reflections of the private sanctum of the 'inner self', but are conceived within certain ideological frameworks constructed by the dominant social order to maintain its own interests. Identities in this analysis are profoundly political (p.82).

The most common metaphor used in the identification of social work and self is also explored. This represented a particular way of viewing the helping relationship, and these discourses were recognised as representing the heart of a given culture in the caring enterprise, but analysed in their wider ideological contexts in society (Althusser, 1971). In essence, this metaphor provided a context to the social character aligned to the social identity of social work (Fairclough, 1992).

Chapters four and five have a synthesised approach to analysing both the wider discursive and social practices of the discourse extrapolated from data. It achieves this through a dialogue with a range of theories that explore how each of the styles/genres (discursive practices) can be related to orders of discourses (social practices).

## **4.2 Styles and Genres of Social Work (discursive practices)**

In analysing the accounts, the social and discursive dimensions of roles and identity as styles and genres of social work illustrated how all twelve respondents had broadly constructed the social work identity. In analysing social actors word choices, these words were aligned with the four main practice paradigms in social work. Howe (1987) refers to these as 'The Fixers', 'The Seekers after Meaning' (change at the micro-level based on constructivist/constructionist theories), the 'Radical Structuralists' and 'Radical Humanists' (p.50). Each of these styles (paradigms) is discussed in the context of the discourse themes identified throughout the chapter.

'The Fixers' and clinical social work as styles of social work were aligned together in this data analysis and deconstruction because genres associated with these knowledge formations encompass discourses of 'diagnosis' which run parallel to language of 'The Fixers'. 'The Fixers' as a paradigm for practice contains a specific set of genres in social work discourses. These genres are equated to the language of empiricism, 'outcomes' and 'evidence-based practice' (Howe, 1987; Camilleri, 1999; Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006). Yet, some social actors may pay little credence to these ideological constructs.

Each of these styles speaks of a particular paradigm, a world view in which the social actor identifies and constructs their personal and social work identity. Reflecting their personal values and beliefs within it, it also mirrors their motivations for choosing social work (Halliday, 1995; Fairclough, 2003; Machin and Mayr, 2012). It shows what investment the social actor has made cognitively and emotionally into characteristics that they might ascribe to both sets of identities (service user and social worker). Equally this research must acknowledge that social actors come into the role to find employment and income/careers (Marcuse, 1972). Despite this, through word choices, the ideological connotations inherent in these styles are analysed and show how the becoming or qualified social worker interacts and performs to the constructed role in the way of genres.



Having awareness of self and the professional self is important for social workers in critically analysing and deconstructing their own ideological viewpoint and its effects. Social actors can become more aware of the power of discourses in reinforcing the often contradictory ideological frameworks that underpin them (Pease and Fook, 1999; Parton and O'Byrne, 2000; Healy 2005; Fook, 2012). Rather than consuming and reconstituting these discourses, the social actor accesses a critical space in which to think for themselves in the context of the identity of social work. This form of consciousness change provides opportunities for social actors to come to recognise (collectively) their capacity to take action to overcome pre-determined discourses of social work (Ackelsberg, in Shanley and Narayan, 1997). The power of language to shape and legitimise the social work identity also shows how the power to reclaim the language of its profession is indeed possible (Gregory and Holloway, 2005; Fook, 2012).

#### **4.3 The Fixers alongside Clinical Social Work (DT2 & DT3): Style and Genre (discursive practices)**

Genres associated with the paradigm of 'The Fixers' as ways of acting within discourses of casework were recognisable in the word and verb choices of the social actors such as 'treatment' (J) or '**change their cognitive processes**' (P). Traced back to the very roots of sociology, the paradigm of 'the Fixers' encompasses psycho-social theories such as behaviourism and systems theories which reflect the early attempts of social philosophers to apply ideas and methods of the natural sciences to the realm of social problems (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Howe (1987) uses the term 'fixers' to denote a multitude of ideas that are understood within social work and sociology theories as those associated with the sociology of regulation. Interested in the orderly relationships that exist between people, the functionalist social worker as the task-centred 'fixer' keeps an eye on the social mechanisms needed to deal with 'deviancy' or 'abnormality'. Here the social worker analyses the practical solutions needed to address the practical problems. The following exemplar quotes illustrate this style succinctly. P accounted social work as a way to '**provide for them better... not 'provide' them better but just so they all 'rub' along a bit better**'. K's assumptions show how maintaining and fixing systems was

considered paramount to the social work identity and role by stating **'it's 'trying' to 'keep' families together, 'support' things and 'place' to 'support' them'**. These pragmatists can be seen as social engineers, encompassing notions of empiricism and often using phrases such as 'to improve her social functioning' or 'to reduce the amount of alcohol intake' (Howe, 1987, p.54). Identifying treatment procedures that lead to behavioural cures, The Fixers as the most popular style of social work today showed how these accounts implied levels of authority and power in the social work/service user relationship. As noted by Hall *et al.*, (1997) the search for causes is intrinsic to social work discourses. These Victorian and post-war discourses influence and determine service design, and present limited discourses for those individuals social work intends to benefit. Professional surveillance and discourse, however, extend beyond 'cause' and seeing a service user as the object. With the aim of disciplining and controlling groups, individuals and society, these professional forms of discourse are rooted in a range of surveillance practices of the state (Rose, 1990; Parton, 1991).

These surveillance practices of social work surrounded psychoanalytical and psychosocial theories as two central tenets of casework (Richmond, 1917). Clients and their associated problems were to be individualised with careful 'diagnosis' (Milner, 2001). Acting under a forensic gaze because of the strong emphasis on diagnosis (Harris, 1995), clinical and functionalist approaches to social work developed within the context of a prosperous, relatively secure society in the two decades following the Second World War. In this 'therapeutic' (albeit clinical) enterprise, the role of expertise assumed that every problem was psychological and behavioural (Gregory and Halloway, 2005).

It is not surprising to see word choices such as helping families to 'rub' along a bit better or 'trying' to 'keep' them together. These are ideologically, historically and culturally crafted ideas in the context of helping those individuals make the necessarily personal adjustments to function 'normally' in society. These genres result in a diagnosis of problems and the individual being viewed as the object of faulty behaviours and in need of professional guidance in order to restore

equilibrium. Having little time for metaphysics<sup>9</sup> which query the material nature of reality as well as concepts (Howe, 1987), these characteristics of the social work identity imply how the social actor will practise in line with their construction. That is, in observing and describing the social world captured or recorded, the observer will consider this as the actual reality that is presented before them.

Suffice to note that social workers' genres as a result of this construction will ignore the structural causes or dialectical relationship with oppression, and how this might manifest itself through a range of discourses that pathologise the individual. The notion of 'abnormal' behaviour relates more to the morals, values and ideological frameworks that underpin it, alongside a range of social constraints that hinder free expression and creativity. To individualise behaviour and function of humans in this way is to locate the problem in those individuals whichever way you look at it. Problem behaviour such as the 'dysfunctional' family and its associated stereotypical knowledge formations equates with people being treated just like any other natural organism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). This shows how the construction of professional discourse constructs the 'case' for casework, but only in as much as it is created by the responsible professional (Hall *et al.*, 1997).

The combination of behaviourism, systems theory and psychoanalysis resulted in crisis intervention and task-centred methods in social work. These genres will result in a type of (inter-) action in social work, that is, the professional who applies 'treatment' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Howe, 1987; Stepney and Ford, 2000). Thus these styles identified from word choices symbolise and echo wider discursive and powerful social practices (institutional and professional discourses). Chapter five (post-socialisation) points this out further, where qualified social workers (who have had access to critical theories in their studies) still consciously and actively choose these types of professional discourses and styles of social work in line with their construction of social work.

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<sup>9</sup> Metaphysical arguments are inextricably linked with problems of epistemology and philosophical logic. This is understood as the possibilities of the natural science (realism) and idealism (relativism) constituting a form of knowledge in its own right (often referred to as transcendental branches of philosophy) (Harrison-Barbet, 2001).

#### 4.4 Radical Social Work (DT4): Style and Genre (discursive practices)

The style and genre associated with S\* in the analysis of the word and verb choices used, such as **'I would put forward a strong case for the advocacy because obviously we need to fight'**, show what types of genres are associated with radical social work paradigms. Yet this also presents the social worker with a dilemma in practice within organisational surveillance practices. For example, S\* stated **'You 'do' the 'bidding' of the state, but you also 'fight' the state so you're in a weird position really because you're not with the state, but you are with the state'**. Not surprisingly, the social actor is left managing these knowledge frameworks and its effects in often complex ways.

Radical social work was born in the 1970s, where material and structural problems that individuals faced were highlighted in the work of Meyer and Timms (1970). These authors showed powerful accounts of the working-class confused when in contact with social workers. Difficulties in paying bills and managing finances pointed out the failures of managing casework that had blamed individuals for structural problems of inequality. Bailey and Brake's (1975) work was the first text that encompassed radical structuralist ideas and social work; it did not reject casework *per se*, but outlined its history of oppressive social practices in working at a micro-level. Termed the 'revolutionaries' as the Radical Structuralists paradigm by Howe (1987, p.50), social events are considered here as determined by society's economic interests and proponents take a pure materialist<sup>10</sup> view of the social world. Any objective material reality is equated with the social consequences of capitalism (Mills, 1963). Influenced primarily by Marx, individuals are seen to respond to their material needs that determine their psychological well-being and their own society (Howe, 1987; Fook, 1996, 1999; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009).

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<sup>10</sup> Broadly speaking, the term materialism draws on Marx's theory of history and the material world of economics. Marx (1977) studies society, economics and history as 'dialectical-materialism'.

The authors of the *Manifesto for Social Work and Social Justice* (Jones, Ferguson, Lavalette and Penketh, 2004), started by stating that the crisis of social work can no longer be tolerated. These authors argue that social work in Britain has lost its direction and more effective ways of resisting the dominant trends in social work requires “a new way forward for a new engaged practice” (Jones *et al.*, 2004, cited in Lavalette and Ferguson, 2007, p.198). Striving for relationship-based social work with service users (Scottish Executive, 2006), this was deemed as one of the most popular idealised constructions of the helping relationship inherent in the social work character and identity. Since there is a perceived lack of opportunity for direct work alongside the dilution of social work values, radical structuralists in social work argue that this stems directly from the neo-liberal economic and social policies of the UK (Ferguson, 2003, 2006).

Paradigms for practice here see the exposure of neo-liberalism economics for having eroded the ‘traditional’ role of social work (Lavalette and Ferguson, 2007; Ferguson, 2007). The radical structuralist paradigm for practice is based on an activist tradition of social work and has generally been viewed as the minority approach (Midgley, 2001). Described as the road not taken in the history of social work (Reisch and Andrews, 2002), these arguments are based on locating the sources of human struggle as being equated with the structures of society (Ferguson and Woodward, 2009).

The words (concepts) of radical social work in the account of S\* did represent aspects of radical social work. This narrative plot was firmly rooted in conflict with the state and was perceived as a key characteristic of social work. J implicitly referred to the state as ‘limitations’ in taken for granted ways, but in the context of dialecticism it is interesting that there are no signs deployed such as ‘opportunities’ as opposed to limitations, thus restricting any perceived opportunities that might be present in state social work.

Whilst these discourses of resistance are indeed important for the development of critical perspectives in social work, at times however these discourses are not easy

for the social actor to manage. Sometimes leading to cognitive dissonance<sup>11</sup> or a lack of motivation in the disillusioned or alienated workforce (Jones, 2001; Ferguson and Lavalette, 2004; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009), agency on the part of the social worker can often be left unquestioned. Whilst cognitive dissonance is a useful way in which to articulate the false consciousness of social work (idealism) drawn through processes of identification, cognitive dissonance also promotes dichotomous ways of thinking. As Dascal (2003) points out,

When conflict involves practical issues of existential importance, it can have - on the contrary - a paralysing effect, rigidifying and further polarizing the opposing positions, thereby preventing conceptual creativity and therefore, the solution of the conflict (cited in Weiss and Wodak, 2003, p. 151).

These types of conflict stem from notions of idealism and materialism, but instead of seeing these as opposites, they are mutually exclusive concepts. Rather than seeing such ideals as incongruent or in opposition to one another, the principles of Hegelian (Hegel, 1807) dialectics remind us that this is logic. This synthesis (which is still not wholly true) can then become a new thesis (Lancaster, 1959). This is what Hegel argued was an inherent product of thought itself. The problem of reconciling opposites in the history and identity of social work can be considered as never absolute. Hegel's work highlights how in processes of identification and social work, it is the social actor's problem that they encounter in trying to understand its complexity. The problem is that when social actors examine discourses, it is often impossible to fit these ideas into neat pigeon holes. In essence, the contradictions inherent in social work provide the very platform for the dialogue and synthesis (new thesis) of social work identities.

The identification of the contradictions inherent in styles of social work enables critical social workers to find a space in between two opposing concepts. The realities of radical structuralist social workers as revolutionaries may be considered

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<sup>11</sup> Drawing on Festinger's (1957) cognitive dissonance theory, where social actors have two conflicting or inconsistent cognitions, this is considered to produce a state of tension and incongruence ("dissonance") in the social actor.

as impossible task or paradigm for practice in the current neo-liberalist climate. Yet as a number of scholars have pointed out, the uncertainty and management of social identities has an important ideological role in social processes of identification aligned with social identity (Mitchel, 1981; Abrams, 1992; Deaux, 1992). Identification with large scale social categories such as 'limitations' presents social work as a somewhat agentless entity. Whilst these motivations are driven by the concerns of the 'truth' presented about social work and society, this can have profound effects on people's self-confidence, self-esteem and sense of who they are (Breakwell 1986, 1992; Sachdev and Bourhis, 1993).

The problem with radical structuralism for social work is that it views everything as stemming solely from neo-liberalism and capitalism, but these can often be digested and reconstituted by social actors in dualistic ways in the language of managerialism (see the work of Carey, 2008, 2012). This study does not adopt a Marxist grand theory approach to economics in CDA as Fairclough (2003) does in his work, but embraces Marx's concept of history and emphasises the work of Althusser in the context of ideology and social work. Whilst historical traces from previous social structures show how Marx (1977) believed that limitation and liberation of creativity in humans was not an abstract or will, nor inherent in human nature as an intrinsic quality, but a part of inheritance of the cultural transmission of these ideas from the social legacy of previous generations, Kant, Hegel, Althusser and Mead emphasised that the social formation of human consciousness developed within social interaction. To the social actor immersed in cultures of social work, even though dialectical materialism is an important discourse of resistance, this form of consciousness raising can equally result in apathy as opposed to activism. This ultimately depends upon the social actor's original motivation for coming into social work. For Marx (1977) consciousness is connected in complex ways as the human being is always the social being. As Burkitt (1991) points out,

...for the individual - their nature and consciousness - can only be understood in the context of the social heritage that has been handed down to them through social relations as they unfold with historical process (p.114).

Such a view of social work presents it as a profession hindered by a multitude of constraints in its own discourses as opposed to a number of possibilities. What is important in the context of the radical structuralist is a means of identifying how, as Althusser argued, discourses stem from cultural illusion and so have no materiality at all. Some radical structuralist arguments omit the effects of these discourses of resistance on social actors, as well as how they can be represented and consumed in taken for granted ways. Subsequently, the effect on subjectivities in consuming and redistributing these discourses of resistance through individual interpretation and dissemination at the cultural level is underexplored. It can transcribe into a set of discursive practices in social work such as apathy or cynicism (Jones, 2001; Carey 2008a, 2012). As Foucault (1980) notes, “each society has its regimes of truth, it’s “general politics” of truth; that is, the types of discourses which accepts and makes function as true...” (p.131). Not everything can be reduced to neo-liberalism and structures of society, and critical social work encompasses the importance of context as well as interpretation (Fook, 2012).

Yet individual interpretations of discourses within organisational culture encompass a multitude of discursive practices interpellating the subject in such a way that they are accepted as regimes of truth (Riad, 2005). This shows how power and discourses of resistance are entwined but cannot be separated into binaries. Filtering down to organisational cultures, these discourses construct what subject positions there are within the available discourses from which they come to make sense (Foucault, 1971, 1983; Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994; Hall, 1997). Resulting in the potential to encompass habitualised and typified discourses, the study of organisational discourses drawn from knowledge formations in social work and wider is discussed further in chapter five.

Whilst Marx (1977) looked at the way in which social actors create their world through activity with particular historical and social formations and labour activity, with the pragmatist approach of Mead (in the sense of practical social action as the foundation for communication and change), paradigms that embrace dialectical principles in the context of structure and agency are crucial for critical social work. These discourses can foster choice as a mean of identifying the contradictions/



limitations of recurring discourses as well as their possibilities. Notwithstanding this, radical structuralism has been undermined by more dominant orders of discourse in social work showing how paradigms for practice become over determined by other social elements such as 'evidence-based practice' and behavioural 'outcomes'. The wider domination of empiricism captured in the rhetoric of the caring enterprise shows how social structures control linguistic variation and their elements (styles, genres, discourses). These are embedded in social work education and curriculums: the removal of radical social work in replacement of law might be one example (Ferguson, 2003, 2007). Notwithstanding this, critical theory is embedded in social work education in ethics and values in year one, as well as specific modules throughout subsequent years (e.g. social work theory, organisational theory).

#### **4.5 Structural Oppositions (DT8): Help versus limitations (sub-theme of Radical Structuralism)**

The language of radical social work encompasses a range of ideas which can result in a set of genres containing dichotomous arguments. These pre-determined architectures of texts that are available both locally and beyond surrounding social work can be further evidenced in the work of Carey in 2008, 2012. This work showed how social work practitioners dichotomised their constructions of social work in binary opposite ways. Different texts available about contemporary practice provide structuring conventions in language within social work cultures. These organisational discursive practices result in the legitimation or rejection of discourses (Iedema and Wodak, 1999).

These assumed taken for granted identities of social work illustrate how some social actors make reference to the wider role of social work within '**the limitations**' (J) or '**constraints of the structural**' (S). Depicting and illustrating the relational values of the perceived constraints of 'help' in its wider organisational context, this architecture of text provides the researcher/educationalist with insight into how the social work role is being understood in the context of conflict, power or harmony.

In modern discourses truth is made available in binary oppositions (Gatten, 1991). Through deconstruction Derrida viewed these as problematic because dualistic

ways of thinking ignore the diversity within the categories, as well as the many interpretations in between those categories. The texts privilege 'help' over 'limitations', but if broken down as a political tool the reworking of the oppositions can take place in relation to practice discourses (Parton and O'Byrne, 2000; Healy, 2005; Fook, 2012). These discourses, now taken for granted (or common sense) are part of the cultural heritage of social works narrative of identity reflecting a 'grand narrative' as a commonly accepted belief (Fook, 2012).

What enables discourses to remain dominant lies in the extent to which they go unquestioned by the listener and the teller, whilst the potential to disturb the power inherent in these discourses is in our readiness to critically deconstruct them (Pease and Fook, 1999; Fook, Ryan, and Hawkins, 2000; Parton and O'Byrne, 2000; Fook 2012). 'Opportunities' are not deployed explicitly in the texts showing recurring discursive practices of how local discourses operate. Some discourses can become downplayed and some perspectives can be missing altogether. The subject positions adopted in the texts depict the tension of working within 'state' social work but can mask a multiple of perspectives given the complexity of its role and identity. These discourses represent a subject position of 'powerlessness' ultimately presenting itself as 'limitations' in what methods of intervention, opportunities and services are provided to service users.

S\*'s text firmly committed to the notion that the state presented social workers with '**structural handcuffs**' and these binary oppositions in the understanding of 'help versus constraints' dichotomises social work where one characteristic is devalued in comparison to another (Fook, 2012). Even though some of the social actors had not yet entered the practice domain, 'help' was seen in opposition to '**limitations**'. The use of binary opposites is a barrier to a wealth of alternative meanings and interpretations, yet it is fair to say that social work has dichotomised its own profession based on a range of arguments such as the rational-technical versus practical-moral (Parton and O'Byrne, 2000).

Resulting in a failure to take accounts of the varied narratives involved in social work practice, learners will be further exposed to reconstituted discursive practices

such as 'bureaucracy versus less face-to-face work' or 'deskilled' when socialised into the practice domain (Jones, 2001; Carey 2008a, 2012). Whilst on the one hand these patterns of speaking can be identified as discourses of resistance of the perceived restrictions of the neo-liberalist state and managerialism (Ferguson and Lavalette, 2004; Ferguson, 2007), they can also be understood as discourses of reconstitution in the context of organisational cultures. Discourses of resistance can also be products of the habituations and typifications drawn from interaction (Berger and Luckmann, 1996). Yet whilst social events do have causes and social institutions affect actors, these actors will cognise situations with the terms they have available (Casey, 1995). Showing how discourse is a historically contingent body of regularised practices of language that are accepted by a particular community, these construct and legitimise the way social work is practised. These discourses make possible certain statements and communicational practices whilst disallowing others (Casey, 1995).

The recursivity<sup>12</sup> of language in general and discourses of social work in particular showed how speech acts can be initiated at local levels and how ideological power interpellates the subject when interacting within recurring features of genres (Fairclough, 2003). These serve as both coherency in texts as well as a range of constraints, underpinned by a semantic context for what kinds of speech acts are available in accounting for the social work identity/role (Wodak and Meyer, 2009; Machin and Mayr, 2012).

The recontextualisation of organisational discourses has the potential to turn structuring relations (collective ways of talking) and meanings (interaction) in language into structured relations and meanings (as socially sanctioned assumptions). The term recontextualisation is used in this study initially as the various ways of appropriating, using or re-using talk or discourses drawn from particular contexts (Hall *et al.*, 1999). What this means is that recontextualisation of these discourses, as partly a matter of how discursive practices and ideology

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<sup>12</sup> Broadly speaking, recursive language is defined in linguistics as routinised language related to repeated application or use (Fairclough, 2005).

interpellates and constrains the subject, and in this context provides the prime means for reconstructing meaning in organisational contexts/discourses (Iedema, 1998). Recontextualisation entails more than just representation of speech because these representations can be responsible for producing and sustaining orders of discourse (Hall *et al.*, 1999). Recontextualisation is revisited in more detail in the final two chapters of this thesis, alongside revisiting the limitations of state social work as the main order of discourses within contemporary practice.

#### **4.6 Radical Humanist and Interpretivist Social Work (what is not said)**

What is not said in critical discourse analysis is equally as important as what is said (Fairclough 2003). Often reflecting orders of discourses, some aspects of the identity of social work were omitted altogether in these accounts. Even though radical humanism and radical structuralism can be aligned together, sharing similar principles of evoking change, these have different philosophical origins (Howe, 1987). Encompassing interpretivist paradigms as well as some strands of radical structuralist ideas (Marx and history), radical humanism embraces dialectical theories but constitutes a philosophy of praxis (Gramsci, 1971). This is critical theory and does not embrace orthodox Marxist ideas, but is primarily based on tenets of idealism. Derived from Kantian notions that the ultimate reality of the universe is based on idealism rather than materialism, these ideas derive from the same intellectual origins as interpretivism. Here creativity and social work in the form of innovative and productive theory formation is based on praxis, highlighting how the assumptions of these paradigms rest on different ideas to Marx and consciousness:

Individual consciousness is a continuously creative entity generating a perceptual stream of ideas, concepts and perspectives through which a world external to mind is created (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 279).

In *The Phenomenology of Mind*, Hegel (1807) argued how knowledge passes through a series of states of consciousness, until a state of 'absolute' is considered to be reached by the social actor (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). What Hegel's work offers social work practitioners is the recognition that humans live in a world characterised by the constant interplay between subjectivity and objectivity. In

Hegelian terms, these concepts can be viewed as two sides of the same reality. Rather than privileging one set of ideas over the other, this paradigm and its dialectical process is seen as a universal principle (logic).

Interpretivist and radical humanism have been embraced in social work practice in the form of constructivist social work (Parton and O'Byrne, 2000; Milner, 2001; Fook, 2012) whereas other authors such as Healy (2005) refer to this type of social work knowledge as critical social work. Radical humanism and constructivist social work were discussed in the methodology chapter, but these ideas are returned to in more depth in the final chapter of this thesis which embraces radical humanist principles based on praxis. The model offered in this final chapter might go some way to dispelling the myths and stereotypes of social work embracing a different order of discourse in research, practice and organisational contexts. Notwithstanding this, terms like raising consciousness or educational strategies aligned with these paradigms were not referred to in the discourses of social work presented here, despite students being taught social work methods in year two of their studies.

Some might argue that the realities of social work constitute the role of the social worker as purchaser of services only (as a 'service led' process), asserting that social workers should focus on service users' needs and be more aligned with practical/material assistance rather than being there to fight oppression; this kind of 'blanket' statement masks the diversity of roles, imagination and skills utilised within care management and adult social work. Whilst the Barclay Report (1982) reconceptualised care managers as assessing needs and commissioning the provision of social care, the second activity was to provide "face to face communication between clients and social workers, in which social workers are helping service users to tolerate, or to change, some aspect of themselves or of the world in which they are living" (pp.33-34). This type of discourse aligned with the lack of resources available within state social work is a real frustration for social workers, stemming from material consequences of structures of oppression and inequality. Equally for the social actor as economic pragmatist, it is important to recognise that the motivation for coming into social work might also be based on

doing the work and paying the bills in order to engage in a consumer-led society (Marcuse, 1972). Whilst Carey's (2008) research captured how some social actors depicted their motivation for entering social work as based on economic reasons, and supports Marxist claims that economic imperatives bind employer's identities, on the other hand, encompassed in terms of advocacy, support or therapeutic intervention, Carey (2008) argues how social work can be viewed as a 'romantic role' (p.350).

This research supports new languages surrounding the identity of social work which can stem from critical deconstruction, and this study is useful for the academic in the recruitment stages of social work education programmes. In the identification of which style of social work social actors have constructed (pre-socialisation), it might point to the orders of discourses which sustain the stereotypes of the profession. In order to step outside these discourses, the educationalist can identify which paradigms for practice are underrepresented in knowledge formations, and this research emphasises a focus on those discourses that are marginalised or not spoken about altogether in social work. In fostering such criticality, this might go some way to illuminating just how much the language of human rights and social justice is omitted in the accounts of social actors to date. Rather than reinforcing these preferred or sought after identities of social work, the educationalist builds on this knowledge but in a way that deconstructs the inherent contradictions that these might pose in the context of anti-oppressive and discriminatory practice. Encouraging a paradigm shift towards the language of interdisciplinarity and social work might reduce the dualistic structuring conventions inherent in its own language.

#### **4.7 Orders of Discourse (social practices): Casework (DT1) and The Fixers (DT2)**

Central to the principles underpinning 'The Fixers' was social casework, which was embedded with notions of diagnosis and treatment. Derived from sociology and clinical psychology, these frameworks of knowledge on the one hand consist of exercising coercive power over service users (like psychiatrists do) or, on the other hand, attempting to normalise individuals through recourse to some form of

moralistic critique (Smail, 1995). Inherent in psychotherapeutic or clinical social work is a presentation of false ideals and consciousness in that the social worker is seen as someone who can help the service user help themselves. In other words, change the world and client responsibility in order to lessen the distress experienced. This message, says Smail (1995) is inherent in capitalist relations, which depend upon the producers or dispossessed experiencing their misery as essentially owing to something that is fundamentally wrong with them. Since therapy is by definition a professional service, this demonstrates the role of this discourse in the production and reproduction of power in the context of 'help' possessing an economic interest in promoting such a goal. Naturalised discourses of 'help' show how discourses of treatment are mainstream as an order of discourse, whereas 'fight' appears marginal (Fairclough, 2003). Orders of discourse show how diverse genres, styles and discourses are networked together, and J and P's texts can be specifically aligned with medical discourses underpinning a profession which claims to be social. Medical discourses as orders of discourse which influence discursive practices in social work are more apparent than social workers might like to think (Parry and Parry, 1979). These reflect wider changes in social structure as a result of the shift from religious to scientific principles (Payne 2006; Webb, 2007).

What Fairclough's (1993) terms as orders of discourse for social work, the styles and associated genres of 'The Fixers' can be related to wider historical and ideological forces of Westernised culture in the search for truth and the management of human struggle. Stemming from the natural social sciences and their replacement of the previous religious principles all those years ago, these Victorian and post-war discourses inevitably reflect the dominate epistemè of contemporary practice frameworks of behavioural cures and outcomes (see the work of Forrester, 2010). This co-constructed identity of social work can be problematic for the critical social work practitioner who begins to see the cracks this type of wall might present. This can be identified as a 'sticky plaster notion' of recognising social problems when working with service users. Individuals' problems inherently relate to inequality and oppressive social structures, and so the practitioner taking a surface approach to working with individuals and not seeing the bigger picture only results in the

consumption and reconstitution of those discourses. Contemporary literature captures how 'The Fixers' in the way of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and motivational interviewing are the orders of discourse and favoured paradigm for practice with behavioural outcomes (see the work of Tober, 2007; Arkowitz, Westra, Miller and Rollnick, 2008; Forrester, 2010). The Welsh Government's ten year substance misuse strategy for Wales, *Working Together to Reduce Harm 2008–2018* (Welsh Assembly Government, 2008) is an example which shows how this favoured style of social work is reinforced ideologically. In the recommendations for evidence-based interventions (as empiricism - the language of outcomes), the transtheoretical model of change provides the very framework to help people adjust their personalities and vary their motivation in showing their readiness to change their behaviour (De DiClemente and Prochaska, 1998). Again, the emphasis is placed on the individual and their free-will in escaping their own misery with the help of the expert. Not dissimilar to Bull and Shaw's (1992) research all those years ago, social work embraces the most popular models and methods for practice intervention of any given time.

Drawing on institutional state apparatuses, this shows the way ideology interpellates individuals which are drawn from wider societal and historical signs in constructions of 'help' (Althusser, 1971). 'Help' to 'sort out', 'fix' and 'treatment' are naturalised discourses alluding to a wider social order of the social work identity. Whilst seemingly obvious for someone entering the caring professions, the becoming-subject of the social worker is surrounded by pre-existing discourses illustrating wider intertextual dimensions of the connotations of 'help'. The becoming subject is always interpellated by ideology because of our reliance on language to establish that reality and represents a social and imaginary reality (false consciousness). Linguistic constructions create our reality in general through the speech acts we choose to draw on in the everyday (Butler 1990). As Sewpaul (2013) argues in drawing on Althusser's concept of ideology (1971, p. 176), "individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects . . . even before [they are] born".



Ideology is understood here as representing false consciousness but is about the only consciousness subjects are considered to have (Sewpaul, 2013). As products of society, “those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology” (Althusser, 1971, p.176). Sewpaul (2013) notes how based on its nonconscious nature of ideology itself, the “accusation of being in ideology only applies to others never to oneself” (Althusser, 1971, p.175). Thus it can be argued that social actors can fail to recognise their own reinforcement in reproducing ideological formations and stereotypes of what constitutes social work.

What Althusser’s theory offers critical social work is a form of critical self-consciousness. By this, individual agency challenges ideology, a view countered and challenged by emancipatory theorists such as Giroux (1994) and Hall (1985). These theorists argue that critical awareness can contribute to developing alternative paradigms to practice and radical change. Giroux (1994), Hall (1985), Freire (1970) and Gramsci (1971, 1977) all pointed out the the power of emancipatory pedagogical strategies as ways to engender change and human agency (Sewpaul, 2013).

As Gramsci (1971) pointed out in the context of ideological hegemony, change could not come from the masses but can occur through the dialogue of intellectuals over time (Sewpaul, 2013). Thus the social workers’ role as community educationalists and of the social work educator who uses emancipatory strategies is paramount to critical social work. The role of ideology becomes critical to the extent it has the potential to reveal truths by critically deconstructing historically conditioned social forces. Alternatively, it can also reinforce the concealing assumptions of common sense in social work. Thus, it is vital that common sense or taken for granted assumptions be subject to critical interrogation and analysis (Gramsci, 1971), so that the social actor is able to move away from the ‘subjected being’ to a subject that authors their own narrative. Althusser (1971) captures this point succinctly, to be the ‘author of and responsible for its actions’ (p.182).

Yet the significance of language is embedded within the caring enterprise, from the choice of words and verbs used to describe workers, right through to the

characteristics and ideals of what is considered as needing to be done. It represents the interrelationship of both concepts (words) and values, and has the potential to either empower or control the subject (Pease and Fook, 1999; Parton and O'Byrne, 2000; Gregory and Holloway, 2005). Such professional activity can be viewed as a form of social action and accomplished through the techniques of institutional orders and surveillance (Hall *et al.* 1997). Institutional discourses that derive from the state apparatus and social work are saturated by discourses of casework. For example, 'Finding them **help** and **aid**, in order to make them **live more independently**' (KL) or as S2 states 'Just **help** and **intervene** at **crucial points** in people's **lives**.'

Casework as the main order of discourse can be aligned with a set of associated genres in social work. These were inherent in the social actor's construction of what constituted casework (DT 1, 2, 3). This theme provided the backdrop to the assumptions underpinning how all twelve social actors had constructed the social work activity primarily in the form of one-to-one casework. Analysed through the notion of the sign (Saussure), this showed how, in the formation of social relations, word choices such as 'one-to-one' work, 'help', 'aid' and live more 'independently' are key genres identifiable within the language of casework (see literature review).

In contemporary literature, casework as 'one-to-one' social work is often viewed synonymously with 'face-to-face', 'skilled' or 'traditional' social work by practitioners (Jones, 2001; Postle 2001, 2002; Carey, 2008, 2012). These ways of talking are used to suggest and infer that contemporary social work practice is viewed as somewhat different to the social actor's original idealised construction of what they thought it was or should be. 'One-to-one' work in the interviews was accompanied with other word choices like 'support' and 'enable', which showed how these sign systems or rhetoric could be linked to both historical texts and contemporary knowledge frameworks within social work discourses. 'Aid', one of the terms referred to by a social actor, is a word quite often related to charitable interventions of giving relief to the destitute (Garland, 1985; Lewis, 1995; Harris, 2008). Gregory and Holloway (2005) conceptualised the social work identity during the Victorian period as being part of the moral enterprise (see literature review).

These historical discourses of casework underpin the very fabric of a philanthropic British social work identity and are ideologically saturated (Garland, 1985; Lewis, 1995; Harris, 2000, 2008). Whilst casework and one-to-one social work can be argued to be dated, this style in the way of a social identity (way of being) of the social worker showed how historical and contemporary discourses had been cognised by the subject. For example, P states it is about **'working with families to enable them to keep their children and to provide for them'**. Demonstrating their experiential values in the text, word choices showed how social work was mainly presented as something that characterises work with individuals in the endeavour to 'help' and give 'aid' to 'enable' and 'support' individuals to become more 'independent' and 'live in the community'. As Burkitt (1991) points out,

It is within our imaginary, ideological relation to the social structure that individuals take on the role or a position in social practices which necessitates a certain form of individuation and the construction of a particular identity (p.86).

Not dissimilar to Richmond (1922), who argued casework encompassed working with individuals to help develop their personality and to make the necessary adjustments in order to live independently, these historical and ideological traces of the charitable helper show how Victorian ideologies are still in operation and consumed today. Saturated in more modernised language and policy such as the Unified Assessment (2002), words like 'maximising independence' point to its historical and ideological origins. Aligned with the state apparatus of the minimalist welfare state which encourages less dependency, social actors might argue that these are their own personal beliefs or characteristics aligned with self. Althusser illustrates how individuals believe that their ideas are freely chosen when in fact they are not. Showing how discourse has a practical as well as discursive and cognitive aspect, these cultural spheres can limit as well as enable humans to act within the boundaries and perspectives of social conscience (Burkitt, 1991).

S\*'s account which at one point states 'I have always **been caring in nature**' and 'I have **always been good at coaching people**' shows how personal characteristics of

one-to-one work (casework) in social work had been aligned with the social actor's personal identity. It also showed how ideology had interpellated the subject. One-to-one work for H for example illuminated a particular positioning in the discourse of casework with H stating, '**I wanted to be by their side**'.

These social actors can be argued to be supporting a particular social system and play a role in supporting objective structures and their ideological forces (Althusser, 1971). This is because the ideology of casework and one-to-one social work constitutes and organises the ideas (subjectivity) of the social actors in social processes of identification, which according to Althusser (1971) is a cultural allusion (Burkitt, 1991). This is because ideology is considered to play a dominant role in society at controlling the masses in hegemonic ways and is independent of human activity (Gramsci, 1971). Creating representations of the real world, or put another way, stemming from the emergent powers (real domain) of the social structures within it (welfare state), the concept of reality and its dialectical relationship to discursive practices (actual domain) influences the subjectivity (empirical domain) of the social actor (Bhaskar, 1989). This shows how the reality of the world and the materiality of practice in social work are always constituted through discourse. This also highlights how social processes (interaction) internalise each other, but are not reducible to discourses (Harvey, 1996).

What is important to note in the context of the sign in this research, however, is that in combining the ideas of Althusser's (1971) ideology and post-structuralism, the practices which individuals engage in, which they believe to be freely chosen, have very little concrete materiality about them at all. In essence, they are culturally based illusions organised by a discursive network of signifiers (Burkitt, 1991). Thus the critical social worker is encouraged to critically deconstruct these styles and associated genres in the endeavour to reconstruct alternative versions of the social work identity. In the deployment of social work concepts such as community education and group work, these were not chosen, illustrating how these ideas were omitted as part of the varied and diverse styles of social work. As Brandon and Jordan (1979) argued, "powerful social forces push social work into restricted roles" (p.1). Hall (1985) countered the arguments of Althusser (1971) by highlighting,

We are not entirely stitched into place in our relation to the complex field of historically-situated ideological discourses exclusively at that moment alone, when we enter the 'transition from the biological existence to human existence.' We remain open to be positioned and situated in different ways, at different moments throughout our existence (p.103).

One of the roles of the social work educator, researcher and practitioner endeavouring to embrace anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice is to outline to learners and practitioners how the discourses associated with the social work identity are open to interpretation. Subjects can be positioned and open to discourses in different ways. A variety of interpretations of social work and uncritical acceptance of them emerges from the language and behaviour of social workers themselves, as well as stemming from the wider cultural and structural contexts in which they exist. In the search for communicative competence (Pease and Fook, 1999; Fook, 2012), that is the ability to create locally appropriated realities of social work in the development of alternative discourses, it is worth pointing out the negotiable nature of the social work identity.

The emphasis of this research is on the potential of CDA and dialectics in social work, where Foucault's (1979) analysis of power provides it with opportunities to identify the power and personal agency of the social actor. Power may be used to empower the more powerful as well as less powerful groups. In essence, the social actor has agency and power to reconstruct the identity of social work in a variety of ways, subsequently influencing their practice. A change in language can result in a change of genres and styles, and social actors must act locally, that is, when they feel compelled to act; no centralised organisation can direct this (Ackelsberg, in Shanley and Narayan, 1997).

## Chapter 4, Part 2: Presentation of the ‘Other’ – Those whom social workers intend to benefit

### 4.8 Introduction

The orders of discourse in the context of the presentation of service users are presented below. These show which dominant use of pronouns and verbs surround the social identity of the service user. Styles and genres are integrated in the discussion of orders of discourse, as this part of the chapter illustrates how genres represent power alongside social distancing tactics in language. Genres are illuminated through word and verb choices as well as the use of pronouns, and these were further aligned with ideological constructions of the service user in the context of self-help. The orders of discourse identified in the context of the service user and social worker relationship were constructed around:

- 1 Impersonalisation (DT5) (sub-theme of less fortunate DT10).
- 2 Self-help (DT6) (sub-theme of Helpless DT7).
- 3 Change (DT11).
- 4 Making a Difference (DT9).

### 4.9 Genres and Styles (discursive practices): Self-help (DT6) and Helpless (DT7)

If people need ‘help’ then these accounts might indicate the ideological squaring that has taken place by the social actor, underpinning their choice of language and consumption of professional discourse. That is, it assumes an opposite in terms of the identity of marginalised and oppressed groups as being ‘helpless’. This was the assumption of QP who stated **‘What I saw in social work which I related to was having time to help people who needed help and were not able to do it themselves and were being side tracked by everybody’**. J’s account **‘You ‘help’ them ‘identify’ their needs and how they could be ‘addressed’** showed how the notion of self-help is consumed and constructed by the social actor. P showed how, through their processes of identification (drawn from early stages of their social work education), the ideology of self-help was being cognised. This social actor stated **‘I can see why ‘doing’ for people wouldn’t ‘work’ because you need to**

**‘encourage’ them to ‘do’ for themselves’.** Aligned with genres of the social worker helping service users to help themselves through a range of behavioural and social adjustments, this ideology can be traced back to mid-Victorian and post-war discourses.

The individual as free subject was prominent in all philosophical, religious and cultural assumptions of the mid-Victorian period (Garland, 1985; Lewis, 1995; Webb, 2006). In terms of everyday social philosophy the values of work, respectability and above all self-help informed the basis of Victorian common sense (Garland, 1985). Embedded into reality as the organisation of the economy, the politics of the welfare state and the practices of its institutions (Garland, 1985), self-help reinforced the belief in free will and its ability to liberate and maximise potential (Lewis, 1995). Maximising potential is echoed in social care policy to date, indicating how methods of assessment show clear resonance with early Victorian ideals (see literature review).

Assuming individuals carry in them the capacity for self-development (Webb, 2006), these accounts show how respondents make sense and interpret the role of social work aligned with ethical idealism. But for the ethical idealist, there is a search for the recovery of moral orientation to account for the social problems of the time (Webb, 2006). Contrary to contemporary values of anti-oppressive practice, strands of ethical idealism (in the form of individualism) underpin welfare regimes and social work’s code of professional ethics (Clark and Asquith, 1985; Rhodes, 1986; Banks, 1995). The role of the state here is of course residual, returning the responsibility to individuals as soon as possible, and the basis for intervention is restricted to moral justification and moral guidance. This has become increasingly tied into methods of intervention in casework (Gregory and Halloway, 2005). Discourses of casework and the subject/object effect in language are drawn from a wider social order concerning social work’s role and identity. Providing detailed descriptions and formulations of service users, the notion of self-help synthesises nicely with the construction of ‘therapy’, showing consistency in the narrative plot and the subject position of expert in the service user/social worker relationship.

#### 4.10 Change (DT11) (genres and subject positions)

The language of change was a recurring linguistic choice for social actors in this research, both as a concept and a verb. Assumed as wanting change or not being able to change, the service user and social work identity was presented in a number of taken for granted ways. Understood here as a sub-set of self-help and its ideology of free will and self-determination, J's relational values communicated how change was equated with being a good social worker. This social actor stated **'a good social worker can actually 'change' their life'**. This provides a social characteristic of the social work identity, and the social worker who does not is considered less favourably or bad.

The ambiguity of change and self-help as concepts is not without its problems. For example, when qualified, QS noted **'some people don't want to 'change' or might not be 'able' to 'change' or society might 'keep' them there even if we want them to 'change' or 'support' them 'to' 'change'**.

Yet, the social character of social work as an agent of change is presented in these accounts (pre-socialisation) in idealistic ways set apart from QS's construction. Viewed as a good 'outcome', change is an ideologically embedded concept, and a product of wider social and historical practices of the notion of the deserving and undeserving in British society (see literature review). As a semiotic choice, the concept of change is expanded upon in chapter five, considering its use by the social actor post-socialisation. A more detailed analysis and deconstruction of change is presented later in this thesis.

#### 4.11 Making a Difference: The social character of the social work identity (DT9)

Metaphors communicate more abstract ways in which to construe experience, and as expressions in discourse these reflect and reinforce the way the social actor cognises a given phenomenon of the world. In the context of the most commonly used metaphor – **'make a difference'** – in these accounts, this constructs a particular character of social work. Halliday (1978) defines metaphor as one of the variations of language, as expression of meanings that are available within the



surrounding social semiotic system. Their usage involves a non-literal use of words: for example to ‘make’ a difference to a human being’s life does not involve the re-making of a human being; or if someone stated the sky is crying, they do not mean in an emotional way. For a word like ‘make’ to function properly, it is used by the social actor in a specific context that allows the interpreter to decide what type of linguistic entity they are analysing. The use of metaphor communicates a way in which the social actor cognises the role of social work in the context of this research. It is the concept that they want to describe through the use of a metaphor (target domain – see Appendix B).

The relationship between CDA and cognitive linguistics coincided with Fowler *et al.*’s (1979) publication *Language and Control*. The book *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980) was later understood as using a cognitive approach to CDA. Authors in these traditions increasingly recognised metaphors as significant in ideological persuasion and communication (Koller, 2004; Charteris-Black, 2006). The presupposition of this metaphor (making a difference) is that the social worker is perceived as someone who creates an end product. It represents a construct which social actors (in this study) attributed to social workers and service users in the context of the helping relationship (Halliday, 1995; Fairclough 2003; Machin and Mayr, 2012). In basic terms, this metaphor is the means by which social actors understand the concept of social work and helping people. Glossing over the micro-details of what type of ‘**difference**’ this social work intervention entails, this type of rhetorical trope<sup>13</sup> is likely to be most commonly found in the caring enterprises, and reinforced through a range of media and marketing strategies targeted at people professions such as teaching, social work, counselling and nursing.

The problem with this of course is that if these types of metaphor become accepted as being how social actors think of social work, or as reflecting the model on which they base their practice, this will affect the way in which they organise and conduct social work. What happens when the social worker finds or cognises that social

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<sup>13</sup> Tropes are figures of speech and so a rhetorical trope is used to produce a shift in the meaning of words. They are sometimes used to persuade the listener or audience (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

workers do not make a difference in all cases, and perhaps it is the service users themselves who make the difference? Rarely do social actors describe this in the context of collective wider society, or consider a less idealised notion of social work which might contribute to control and the surveillance practices of the welfare state. Whilst metaphor is fundamental to human thought, it can also be used as a tool to help reconstruct the phenomenon described. The normalisation of the metaphor **making a difference** might go some way to organising society and the caring enterprise in particular ways. This has implications for the way caring services and roles are performed, consumed and redistributed, drawn from a variety of discursive and social practices. Suffice to note that critical social work can examine what kinds of idea are communicated in rhetorical tropes. These tropes underpin a range of metaphors in social work and can be analysed in their wider ideological context. It is important to identify what is abstracted and glossed over, and what kinds of sequence of social work activity these metaphors might promote (Machin and Mayr, 2012; Fairclough, 2003).

#### **4.12 Order of Discourse 1: Impersonalisation (DT5) alongside sub-theme Less Fortunate (DT10).**

The use of pronouns throughout the accounts consistently showed a particular way with which to depersonalise individuals who received social work intervention. These accounts implied the social relation of social worker and service user. What this means is that pronouns provide this information to the interviewer, telling something about the broad terms of the [social work] relation, and what they are considered to **'do'** or **'use'** as depicted. These also illustrate ideational properties in the texts, representing experiential, expressive and relational values. The use of verbs throughout indicated how the style of the social worker was firmly placed in the role of expertise, consistent with the dominant orders of 'The fixers' and casework.

The objectification and genericism of service users in these accounts could be aligned with a multitude of social identities drawn from wider societal discourses: service users are **'poor'** (QP\*, S\*) or **'less fortunate'** (S\*), and so we need to **'use'** (J) something to **'help them'**. Social actors in their objectification of service users (in

the case of S\*'s account particularly) reduced the characteristics of individuals to specific social attributes, and this kind of objectification goes hand in hand with impersonalisation (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

Impersonalisation is often used to give extra weight to a particular statement, as affecting not only a person but a whole entity that requires something (Machin and Mayr, 2012). It can conceal particular issues and convey a particular depersonalised relationship. Through consistent use of the pronoun '**them**', the referential choices made by social actors can create opposites, in this case 'us'. van Dijk (2011) understands this as ideological squaring, where in the texts (accounts) these forms of squaring (measuring up) bring with them associations of values, ideas and activities. These values and ideas are embedded in the construction of professional discourse and are developed historically through the interplay of power and knowledge in the caring enterprise. By looking at these discourses as constitutive of social work activity, moral and professional assumptions can be exposed. Illuminating how these discourses are based on the preoccupation of institutional organisations with providing adequate description and categorisation of service users, these discourses equally provide the context that justifies professional intervention (Hall *et al.*, 1997, 1999). As such, is not surprising to see the use of pronouns throughout representations of what social workers do '**to**' or with '**them**'. The ideological effects of these classifications could be argued to be in contrast with some discourses of anti-oppressive practice. These carry assumptions about social class, personality and characteristics of identity (Fairclough, 2003; Machin and Mayr, 2012). However, to have already deployed a ready-made narrative of identity in the context of clients is to have assumed that their own professional and theoretical knowledge is the correct interpretation of their identity, and this has implications in the context of anti-discriminatory practice (Roscoe *et al.*, 2011). These referential strategies are important for critical social work because they reveal the ideological means through which a person is presented, and demonstrate how people are not seen as individuals but judged as a problematic entity in requirement of something. This is because in any bureaucratic and institutional setting, certain role identities are made through labelling processes and procedures

as a means of maintaining professional credibility and justifying intervention (Hall *et al.*, 1997, 2006). Notwithstanding this, the 'us' and 'them' subject position within the text might assume that the social actor as social worker sees themselves as someone never in danger of being one of 'them' at any stage in their life.

#### **4.13 Conclusion**

The styles and genres of social work which inherently relate to discursive and wider social practices have been analysed in conjunction with paradigms in social work theory and practice. Each of these paradigms communicates a particular set of genres of the social work role and identity, as well as those of service users. Consistent with orders of discourse in wider society, data presentation also highlighted how word choices were inherently linked to the social actor's experiential values. What is important to note is that these very paradigms in social work knowledge formations can sometimes be restrictive, and rarely integrate the concept of interdisciplinarity. The texts of Howe (1987) offer a sound starting point to social work theory and are subsequently disseminated to the learner during their studies. These can persuade the social actor to choose or avoid paradigms where social actors align their underpinning values and principles to their own personal identity and motivations for entering the profession. Often restricting possibilities of more innovative and integrative arguments for practice, or a new language, these paradigms reflect a range of ideological and cultural illusions. To this end, 'The Fixers' and casework discourses reinforce these orders of discourse. Social actors can be encouraged to analyse the ways in which social workers comprehend, represent and reproduce these worlds because each contains genre-specific values (Graham in Weiss and Wodak, 2003).

The concept of interdisciplinarity aligned with arguments of social work's identity provides a new language or thesis for social work. Ironically, social work's constantly shifting and changing identity might find some coherence and stability in the embracement of interdisciplinary principles and approaches. As a means of providing a platform for critical thinking, interdisciplinarity/transdisciplinarity might go some way to alleviating the social actor in managing its often contradictory styles

and associated genres. This type of discourse–knowledge interface provides critical social work with opportunities to embrace its relationship with philosophical, linguistic, psychological, sociological and anthropological dimensions (Weiss and Wodak, 2003). A standardised transdisciplinary language thereby creates a new landscape (or thesis) for the social worker based on a multi-layered approach and analysis of its identity. Knapp and Landweer (1995) in feminist theory, for example, showed how historical, political, sociological and epistemological questions are vital when analysing identity formation. Weiss and Wodak (2003) argue that this is necessary in postmodern societies to transcend old established modes of thinking, particularly when relating any argument to content (in this case the content of social work discourses). This problem-oriented way of analysing the social work identity is vital for the educationalist whose emphasis is on critical thinking and praxis with learners. The co-construction of social work as one which is based on interdisciplinarity and its principles might go some way to reducing the apathy within social work evidenced in contemporary literature (see the work of Carey 2008a, 2012). This problem of apathy manifests itself as symptomatic of a perceived identity crisis in social work; but the question of content is of particular relevance for the critical social worker, because the content of social work discourses requires a theoretical explanation with which to analyse its own texts and discourses. As noted earlier, the emphasis of this research is on the potential of CDA in social work research, practice and education to develop new insights through a dialogue with a range of theories and disciplines in transdisciplinary ways.

The latter part of the chapter showed how relationships within social work were constructed on a range of pre-determined discourses, communicating a range of ideological formations and assumptions of service users within the text. Whilst self-help and discourses of change communicated how some individuals were considered ‘not able’, the language of empowerment in social work stemming from notions of self-determination and free will showed how these ideas were the dominant orders of discourse within the social work helping relationship. Empowerment, however, moves beyond encouraging independence based on treatment and diagnosis discourses for the benefit of the welfare state’s purse and

surveillance practices. It extends to creating a new language for acknowledging these contradictions in the language of social work itself.

The extent to which the social actor's construction of social work changes from the original motivation for coming into it (post-education and training) is underexplored in research to date. This might go some way to acknowledging how the curriculum in its reinforcement of orders of discourse does not help, as well as educators themselves who are convinced by process driven social work and subsequently hinder their freedom for critical thinking and identity formation in social work. As such, a new language is required during social processes of identification in social work education. Regardless of whatever change the social worker or service users intend to embrace, interdisciplinarity may provide a way in which to develop innovative and productive theories and methods of intervention in social work, as well as creating a new space for critical dialogue and pedagogy in research and education.

## Chapter 5: 'Just like a Revolving Door' (post-socialisation social work)

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter has three parts and is structured by presenting the three main orders of discourse contained within the constructed identity of state social work and community care (adult services). Words within quotes are outlined in bold to emphasise the sign (word) or verbs (outlined in single quotations). Pronoun choices are underlined in relevant quotes only and each discourse theme is identified as DT3 for example. These are also illuminated by title at the beginning of each section to illustrate which theme is being discussed and where.

Part one contextualises the chapter by setting the scene of how a 'problem-saturated story' (White 2005) of social work is represented in the accounts of social actors in this study. These accounts are interrelated to wider voices and literature surrounding contemporary adult social work (intertextuality). The concept of the problem-saturated story was first developed by White and Epston in their 1989 book *Literate Means to Therapeutic Ends* which assumes that individual difficulties stem from the stories people draw on to make sense of their identities (Morgan, 2000; Parton and O'Byrne, 2000; Milner, 2001; White, 2005; Roscoe *et al.*, 2011). Taking a post-structuralist approach to analysing discourses, these authors view problem-saturated stories as identity stories, both describing and shaping social actors' subjectivities (Monk *et al.*, 1997). This is a useful way in which to analyse and critically deconstruct the structure of the narrative plot presented in these accounts. More importantly, how they are coherent with or contradict wider pre-determined narratives and sets of discourses (genres and styles) available within social work cultures and organisations (White and Epston, 1989; White 2005).

This chapter then continues by way of analysing the text structure within the overall narrative presented and illuminates how this supports, like a type of scaffold, the background assumptions that enable the problem-saturated story to make sense. Whilst the broader context and grand narrative of social work are indeed plausible (given the relationship of social work and the welfare state), it is also considered

that these types of genres and styles (or positions) inherently support and sustain the ideological effects from which they originate. This chapter considers whether the power of ideology is purposeful in saturating its subjects here, because in sustaining and fostering these discourses, the social actor in the realm of discursive practices (actual domain) is also sustaining and maintaining its paralysing effects. As Foucault (1975) points out, the subject can be seen here as 'not the speaking consciousness, not the author of the formulation, but a position that might be filled in certain conditions by various individuals' (p.115).

In focusing on organisational discourses and how these are consumed and reconstituted in occupational cultures through discursive practices, these orders of discourse are analysed against their inherent assumptions, contradictions and coherence with ideologies in wider society. As noted in chapter two, discursive practices are a poststructuralist term for the way in which discourse is acted on, consumed and circulated in culture (Monk *et al.*, 1997). What is equally important in this analysis is consideration of how discursive practices and subsequent genres, styles and discourses are consumed by the subject impacting upon the discursive construction of the self. The discursive construction of self refers to the type of social production of meaning that takes place in culture in relation to others (Mumby and Stohl, 1991). It is based on recognition of the forces of discursive (collective) practices and the ways in which people are positioned within those practices (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

In the deconstruction process, the analysis of the text structure presented here exposes how marginalised discourses are also available in the way of contradictions. These co-exist alongside the problem-saturated story and provide critical social work with opportunities for the recontextualisation<sup>14</sup> of these orders of discourse. In the context of orders of discourse surrounding social work, this chapter explores

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<sup>14</sup> The concept of recontextualisation draws on Bernstein's (1990) notion that this consists of a process of taking signs (words) and their meaning from their original context in order to introduce them to another context. Recontextualisation then implies a change of meaning in communicative processes.



the complex flow of styles, genres and discourses, and how these are available and represented within occupational cultures of social work (Fairclough, 2005).

The discourse topics identified in data presentation are presented and described in the following way in this chapter:

1. The Ideological and Cultural Struggle (DT1) with sub-themes of DT 2, 3, 8, 9, 11.
2. Clinical or Therapeutic Social Work – sub themes of DT 3, 4.
3. Good and Bad Social Work – sub-themes of DT10a and DT10b.

Each of the sub-themes is clearly outlined in the relevant part of the chapter justifying why they have been clustered in this way, and demonstrates how discourse themes are interrelated with one another in the problem-saturated narrative. In essence, these provide the background assumptions that support and enable this story to make sense.

Part two of the chapter revisits the dominant order of discourse of contemporary social work: that is, how social actors strive for more micro-elements of casework genres or relationship based social work. In this study, these were interpreted by social actors in the way of genres associated with counselling and CBT. Whilst this is undoubtedly part of the identity of social work through its alignment and history of casework, these styles and genres point to the orders of discourse in society at a given time and demonstrate how these stem from powerful structures and their associated social practices. Notwithstanding this, this order of discourse that is represented by social actors paradoxically represents a contradiction in the problem-saturated story of social work. These contradictions are explored in this part of this chapter, showing how social actors in this study demonstrated that ‘therapeutic’ social work may not be as impossible as practitioners and the wider literature purports. On the other hand, it also mirrors the social actors’ motivations and emotional investment for entering the social work profession.

This chapter concludes with how others [social workers] were represented in the casework genre, showing how during social processes of identification the text

structure of the casework account was adopted in particular ways for specific means. Showing identification and ideational properties in these accounts (expressive, rational and experiential values), this illustrated how the discursive construction of self was formed in conjunction to the social identity of others [social workers]. These forms of experience-centred narrative<sup>15</sup> surrounded the account and described what the social actor had observed during their socialisation with occupational cultures (practice placements).

Throughout this chapter the main focus of the critical dialogue is to illuminate what kinds of strategy for action in the context of critical social work can be developed in the way of counteracting dominant discourses in education and practice narratives. This provides ways in which to evoke a variation of interpretations of social works identity through methods of deconstruction and narrative methods of analysis. Viewed as a problem-orientation approach to research, this chapter provides the platform for the final discussion where a model for social work education is proposed explicitly highlighting my own subject position within this research as an educationalist. This shows how a co-constructed narrative of social work and its social identity have been analysed. Thus in order to foster and promote a new language or set of discourses, the critical social worker renders the normal as strange to unpack the problem-saturated story of contemporary social work through critical deconstruction. In analysing the effects of these discourses on the discursive construction of self, the discourse topics discussed in this study capture social work's dominant narrative succinctly.

## **5.2 Introduction and Context: The Problem-Saturated Story**

The quotes drawn from this study (alongside the later part of the literature review) showed what word choices were deployed by students and practitioners in their accounts of state social work (post-socialisation). Under the umbrella of community care, and more specifically care management/care co-ordination, the theme titled

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<sup>15</sup> Experience-centred narratives employ a socially/culturally directed analysis of narrative which assumes that experiences can, through stories, become part of consciousness (Squire in Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2013).

'The ideological and cultural struggle' paints a particular but familiar picture of adult social work. Social actors recounted how **'It was a very – yeah, bureaucratic culture. It was rules, regulations, decisions made for you" (J2)**, whilst H argued it was **"very power-driven'**. In these accounts of social work, social actors overemphasised these words (as concepts) by deploying the use of 'very' throughout. This demonstrated what evaluation had been made in relation to contemporary social work (expressive values). Overlexicalisation (giving a sense of over-persuasion in accounts) showed how these words (very) were used in conjunction with something about social work that was viewed as problematic and ideologically contentious (Machin and Mayr, 2012). It illuminated how the realities of social work discourses (viewed as material practices stemming from the real domain) in their organisational and ideological context are internalised and represented/recontextualised by the social actor in the actual and empirical domain. Highlighting how social actors grapple with their idealised construction of social work drawn from more immediate personal and social contexts, these discourses were identified in the previous chapter as inherently related to the discourses surrounding casework. The chapter demonstrated how these styles and paradigms translated into a particular set of genres and style (identity) within social work practice. Language equated with The Fixers and casework, for example, showed how social actors, '... 'wanted' to 'be' there... I 'wanted' to **'be' 'interacting' with them**, and **'giving' them one-to-one 'work' (H)**.

The analysis adopted in this research is somewhat different to existing literature that has captured similar accounts of social work (Jones, 2001; Postle, 2001, 2002; Carey, 2008, 2012). Albeit these accounts were contextualised in ideology, the authors did not analyse them in the context of processes of identification, nor draw on the lens of CDA with particular reference to organisational discourses. As Fairclough (2005) points out, any studies that include organisations need to include discourse analysis. The realisation of power of social structures and ideologies in infiltrating individuals' interactions is paramount to critical social work in the endeavour to address concerns of the rise of specific discourses and practices over

others in occupational culture (Halliday, 1978; Wodak, 1996; Fairclough and Wodak, 1997a).

The type of analysis deployed in this chapter initially explores how discursive practices operate within local social work cultures. It considers the dialectical effects these have upon the construction of the social work role and discursive construction of self during social processes of identification. Foucault's (1980) notion of subjectivity, which relates to the condition of being subjected to power through knowledge relations, is useful here. Individuals secure a sense of their own meaning and purpose or reality through participating in discursive practices that are a condition and consequence of power relations and superstructures (managerialism and neo-liberalism). These discursive practices are part of the wider governing social practices of the context in which they originate. Students and qualified practitioners who have entered these cultural domains redistribute these discourses in often taken for granted ways. Reflecting a grand narrative or order of discourse surrounding contemporary practice, social actors in their social contexts (where many different and often conflicting discourses operate) show how the agent can be positioned<sup>16</sup> differently within any identified story. Yet as Weedon (1987) highlights, 'the crucial point... is that in taking on a subject position, the individual assumes that she is the author of the ideology and discourse which she is speaking' (p.31).

This is where the notion of multiple positioning is useful for critical social work: it enables subjects to analyse how discourses reflect a particular kind of subjectivity (style) within the story. The concept of positioning can be used here to facilitate a dialogue of a linguistically oriented social analysis of occupational cultures in social work. Each of these subject positions is viewed here as a possible conversation in critical social work (Roscoe *et al.*, 2011). This is because the social identity of social work is not assumed as a stable and singular identity, instead acknowledging that social actors will be faced with constant contradiction, change and on-going

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<sup>16</sup> Positioning is understood in narrative theory as the process by which discourses place people in a particular relational positioning and usually reflects power relations of some kind (Monk *et al.*, 1997).

struggle in social processes of identification aligned with social work. This is not considered as unusual (for different positions to conflict with one another), but viewed as being logical. It is also assumed that the subjectivities social actors live by are not necessarily solely of their own making, but are partly products of social interactions that are in themselves a part of social practices and reproductions of power relations and discourses. In essence, the way that social actors speak about social work not only determines how each individual constructs it, but co-produces and sustains the construction. What this means is that it is also something that can change: any 'truth' or 'facts' about the identity of social work can be contested and are open to interpretation. As Howe (1987) points out, if we can change the construction, we can change the meaning, and by changing the meaning we can change the experience.

The experiential values portrayed in these accounts represent knowledge and beliefs drawn from the social world in which they exist. This is seen as shaped by shared conventions in knowledge production and represented by social workers in this context as a given. Stemming largely from academic and organisational discourses, this language (identified as discourses of resistance and reconstitution in chapter four) provides a culturally recognisable representation of reality rather than a direct correspondence with that reality. These socially sanctioned rituals and assumptions as organisational discourses provide critical social work with ways to analyse specific genres and activities of social work cultures – and more importantly, its power and effects upon the subjects it consumes.

### 5.3 Order of Discourse (DT1) ‘The Ideological and Cultural Struggle’

<b>Sub Themes:</b>	Bureau Professional Frameworks (DT2)
	Just Like a Revolving Door (DT9)
	Put Up and Shut Up (DT3)
	Change (DT8)
	Fighting Back (DT 9)
	Contradictions to the Dominant Plot (DT11)

Presented here as the main order of discourse (DT1) ‘The ideological and cultural struggle’, the semiotic choices outlined in chapter 3 (section 3.11) alongside the literature review (Jones, 2001; Postle, 2001, 2002; Carey 2008a, 2012) and data presentation, succinctly support a problem-saturated narrative of social work. For example the title of the discourse topics identified (above) inherently support the key words deployed (below) when nine social actors recounted their experiences of social work. These ideas encapsulated the following concepts:

<b>Word Choices/ most frequently deployed signs</b>
<b>1. Shock</b>
<b>2. Bored</b>
<b>3. Paper work</b>
<b>4. Control</b>
<b>5. Tick boxes</b>
<b>6. Bureaucracy</b>
<b>7. Stress</b>
<b>8. Frustration</b>

Before analysing the effects of a problem-saturated narrative, any discussion of social work practice with adults in the UK requires a multi-layered analysis of its social context in order to provide an adequate explanation of the causal effects of discourse. Over the past three decades, state social work in the UK has experienced a number of radical reforms. The literature review provided the context to these reforms in adult services and care management/care co-ordination. State social work felt the impact of these changes (Holman, 1993; Dominelli and Hoogvelt, 1996; Wistow and Hardy, 1998; Jones, 2001; Harris, 2002; Bains, 2004; Carey, 2008, 2012). This illustrates how the language of the caring enterprise was recontextualised within the ideology of managerialism, and subsequently underpinned service design and delivery during the 1980s. As Fairclough (2005) points out 'recontextualisation identifies the ('recontextualizing') principles according to which 'external' discourses (and practices) are internalised within particular organisations' (p.933). This is a useful way to identify how the practices of social work were recontextualised in social policy as social 'care' during the 1980s, infiltrating academic literature as a result (Macdonald, 1990; Preston-Shoot, 2001; Payne, 2006; Ellis, 2013).

The recontextualisation of social work as social care during the reforms resulted in a range of genre chains and governance<sup>17</sup> which can be broadly understood as different genres which are regularly linked together. Genre chains and governance are important in sustaining institutional structures of ideology within contemporary society and social work (Lipsky, 1980; Roberts and Sarangi, 1995). These reforms (in the way of genre chains) still infiltrate social policies such as Unified Assessment and Fair Access To Care, and also provide a language for social workers to link together social events they experience in practice with social practices at different times and places stemming from policy rhetoric (Lipsky, 1980; Parrott, 1999; Fairclough, 2003; Carey, 2008). Genres of governance such as assessment frameworks or care plans can be linked to practical genres (ways of acting) in social work. This means that these result in doing things in a particular way rather than

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<sup>17</sup> Drawing on Fairclough's (2003) use of the word, this means any activity within an organisation directed at regulating or managing social practice(s) in particular ways.

governing the way things are done (Lipsky, 1980; Fairclough, 2003). For example, Fair Access to Care (dating from 2002) governs social workers to conduct assessments in a particular way, applying prescriptive eligibility criteria.

Such prescriptive ways of working were described by social actors as ‘just **like a revolving door**’ (DT 9), and this metaphor captured the effects of genre chains and governance on the subject. This form of semiotic resource (metaphor) appeals to a common audience, and can be understood as an experiential metaphor in which actions of the social actor (signifier) come to stand for more abstract<sup>18</sup> meanings that encompass values and identities (van Dijk, 2011). Whilst these practical genres are considered a direct result of the effects of powers stemming from social structures (real domain), social actors also sustain the relations that structure them in their representation/interpretation of these social events in the actual and empirical domain. For example, H concluded, ‘Well after being there, **I ‘felt’ as if frustration ‘took’ over because most of it was just basically’ typing’ away on a computer and ‘doing’ the assessments to ‘go’ to the panel**’ (DT2). K succinctly captures a recurring linguistic choice to account for care management, stating how as [social workers] you just **‘get all the boxes ‘ticked’** (K, H, A\*).

Whilst directly representing how social actors experience the ideology embedded in the society in which it exists, such recontextualisations as representations of the real world (ideology) and how they are mediated involve a complex flow of discourses, genres and styles within social practices (Lassen, Strunck and Vestergaard, 2006). In essence, social actors’ constructions and experiences are representations of the real world, but their knowledge production is understood to manifest itself within socially situated discursive practices which have their own real material social consequences (Jørgenson in Weiss and Wodak, 2003). These socially situated practices involve social workers drawing on collectively organised experiences which contain particular sets or ways of talking about practice which in turn guide the (inter) actions and discourses of other social workers (Pithouse and

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<sup>18</sup> In this sense the term abstract is used in the Hegelian (1966) sense, understood as a one sided argument, as opposed to a concrete one, and devoid of content. It is ‘to separate’ or to ‘draw apart’ the elements of what are considered to belong together as some form of unity.



Atkinson, 1988; Hall *et al.*, 1997, 1999; Taylor and White, 2000; Taylor and Yates, 2001; Riemann, 2005; Taylor and Kelly, 2006).

These accounts represent the power of ideology at work, penetrating the subject in such a way as to govern the social worker in doing things in a particular way. The bureau-professional frameworks that govern practice in the form of assessment resulted in social actors describing social work as ...**'you just 'feel' like you're an administrator and also you' feel' very much like everything's your responsibility'** (QS). In managing these, social actors in this study used words like 'frustration' whilst others quite frequently used the word 'shock' and 'bored' to capture their evaluation of bureau-professional frameworks. A\* sums it up stating **'...you'd 'have' a Unified Assessment framework, which is a 50-page document in care management... it is dramatic really that you have 'ticked' boxes and then you 'have' phrases to 'put' in each of the boxes on the care management'** (DT2).

The grammatical properties (verbs) and configuration of word choices in these accounts such as 'typing' or 'get' all the boxes 'ticked' pointed out how these types of task and roles of social work devalued parts of its identity. These verb and word choices depicted a certain tension or incongruence with an expectation or preferred style of social work. Whilst indexicality shows us how all accounts link to a particular political and ideological context, these accounts also implicitly point out the social actor's construction of the social work identity. For example, KL stated **'But I just 'felt' like "What is going on?" I 'thought' it is supposed to be person-centred'**. Seemingly influenced by the rhetorical tropes embedded in social policy such as 'person-centred' (Unified Assessment, Wales), this social actor was left grappling with the realities of implementing this on the ground floor. Reflecting stereotypical phrases which have been carried by others in the language of the caring enterprise (see the work of Rogers, 1959 and Duffy 2003, 2004), terms like person-centred showed how promotional tropes infiltrated the discursive construction of the professional self. This produces organisational subjectivity (in the dynamic and performative view of meaning, self and identity) in particular ways and manifests itself in socially shared contexts (Mumby and Stohl, 1991; Roberts and Sarangi, 1995; Fairclough, 2005) (DT2).

In chapter four, for example, the word change as a verb was deployed as a characteristic that was part of the role of a 'good' social worker, or in the context of whether service users were perceived as being able to change. Yet in this context (post-socialisation), the positions adopted in these narratives and genres convey a position of powerlessness. For example, QS recounted their state social work experience as **'really negative, as in almost what's the point? There is no point because you can't 'change' anything'**. QP\* on the other hand recounted how other social workers quite regularly said **'Let' it 'go'. You're not 'going' to 'change' anything'** (DT8). Yet as agent with individual substance who, as a conscious creature is capable of performing intentional acts, points to the importance of the analysis of the philosophy of action. What this means is that it is important for the critical social worker to understand the possibilities as well as consequences of agent causation<sup>19</sup> in occupational cultures (Lowe, 2008). Verbs which encompass the notion of 'change' have specific causal implications because these accounts implied that 'change' in the context of social work generally or with the service user was considered a non-possibility as an action in contemporary practice. The presupposition inherent in these accounts points to a rather defeatist positioning within the narrative consistent with notions of powerlessness. One social actor illustrates this succinctly by stating "but that's the way I've always been and deep down **'I would like to change that, but it's like how would' I 'change' that?'** (S3) (DT8).

Identity is constructed through its enmeshment in social and communicative practices, and this demonstrates the extent to which ideology is not solely ideational (embodied by individual ideas and beliefs) but is grounded materially in day-to-day discursive processes (Iedema and Wodak, 1999; Fairclough, 2005). This type of "organisational power is constituted and reproduced through the structures of organisational communication, interaction and symbolism" (Iedema and Wodak, 1999, p.11). Hierarchal power stemming from the managerialist and the mechanistic contexts of social work instigates the values and norms that can be

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<sup>19</sup> In its primitive and undefinable form, agent causation refers to cases of intentional acts by rational agents. In its very basic form agent *a* caused event *b*. Or, agent *a* made event *b* happen (Lowe, 2008).

reinforced at a cultural level (Mumby 1988; Iedema and Wodak, 1999; Fairclough 2005). They can also be contested, however, in the micro-processes of daily interaction by acknowledging how this status of discourse can become normalised (social workers not able to change anything). By labelling this type of discourse as abnormal, this can go some way to contesting its meaning. Whilst discourse can be seen as so dominant it leaves little space for subjects to influence its effects on them (ten Bos and Rhodes, 2003), on the other hand it can be open to agential intervention (Hardy, Palmer and Phillips, 2000; Hodgson 2001; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003).

Never being allowed to act or change anything is one of doom for social workers as it implies a position of resignation. To enable social actors to identify and distinguish institutional power creating feelings of powerless and resignation, critical social workers are encouraged to become their own author of the discursive construction of the professional self. The power of the agent to speak on their own behalf to counteract dominant discourses becomes more of an achievement than a right (Monk *et al.*, 1997). Established in the face of dominant discourses, it involves the critical social worker deliberately making a break from the influence of these discourses (Monk *et al.*, 1997). This is because the dominant discourses become the meaning systems which actors draw on as fixed, and consequently contain a set of genres and combinations of words resulting in specific (inter-) actions in social work. These become the language to articulate aspects of doing in social work practice and become the taken for granted categories of existence; in this sense they become hegemonic. The capacity to act to combat these, for social workers to exert control over their day to day activities (instead of reinforcing the sense of powerlessness), can be based on a strategy for their own action which enables the social actor to create their own power (Ackelsberg, in Shanley and Narayan, 1997).

Discourses stemming from discursive practices provide critical social work with opportunities to illustrate how this context consists of the exercise of power over organisational members, but only in the sense that the social actor subscribes to this consciously or unconsciously. This type of power embodies a 'dialectic of control' in the sense of human agency (Mumby and Stohl, 1991, p.317). What this

means is that discourse viewed in its hegemonic sense, generally defined as domination, involves a dialectical relationship between group forces. This results in the implicit consent of subordinate groups to the world view presented by the dominant group. But these hegemonic discourses in the way of a problem-saturated narrative of state social work are not fixed or a given, and are always subject to negotiations through competing meaning formations (Mouffe, 1979; Hall, 1985; Mumby and Stohl, 1991). The concept of signified absence is one of importance here, referring to the way in which discourses constitute organisational meaning systems (Mumby and Stohl, 1991). They structure meanings on the basis of including or excluding certain discourses, and this shows how certain genres can be systematically ordered by the social actor, as well as inherently drawn from the voices and wider narratives of others. For example whilst J2 highlighted how other social workers constantly 'moaned' about paper work, this social actor deployed exactly the same discourses in the narrative plot, showing the power of discursive practices at work: 'the amount of **form filling and computer work you had to 'do'**, everything you **had to 'wade' through was a shock to me; really off-putting actually**' (DT11).

These discourses privilege certain views over others and construct identities (subject positions) along the way. Through the examination of discursive practices, the critical social worker can identify how these perspectives often negate different conceptual and experiential possibilities in contemporary social work. These positions within the narrative plot serve and perpetuate the dominance of organisational interests inherent in the state apparatus. These can manifest in the form of apathy, cynicism and a sense of powerlessness, having a profound effect on the discursive construction of the professional self. For example, by using metaphors social actors show how they have cognised their own power in the context of the social work identity. DT3 (Put Up and Shut Up) shows how social actors grapple with managerialist ideology. KL noted how "It was a lot more easier to...if the saying is, '**put up or shut up, basically**', whilst S3 highlighted how they would manage the ideology, what they would do: 'Like I'm pretty laid back, so I'd sort of probably '**sit back and go with it**'. QP\*'s account articulates how this social

context is viewed in contrast to their professional self by stating **'You've got to choose when you fight a battle..maybe the longer you are qualified, you do make trade-offs. You don't like to admit that you've let something go that you should not have, but I think at times you do'**. The types of metaphor deployed here are persuasive and point to power relations of hierarchal structures: as one social actor stated, **'I just kept my head down'** (K). Consistent with the narrative plot of powerlessness, state social work is depicted mostly by metaphor showing how social actors understand this concept in relation to external forces and to the professional self (Machin and Mayr 2012). It represents the social actors' thoughts and the embodiment of their human experience, as well as encompassing specific genres (ways of interacting) in social work cultures. As Machin and Mayr (2012) point out, the broader normalisation of metaphor can have consequences for the way social actors organise their societies. In this sense, not being able to change anything has implications for social work, a profession laden with concepts such as advocacy, change, social justice and empowerment. These accounts broadly describe what types of sequence of activities social workers undertake in state social work, **'put up or shut up basically'** (KL) (DT3).

For critical social work, a new language which counteracts the dominant plot using contradictions may help to negate the power and effect of this ideology in the way of genre chains and governance. As Lipsky (1980) noted, management and organisational ideology may be able to establish the rules and procedures that have to be put in place for social workers to undertake their roles, but they will find it difficult to control and monitor the work which is undertaken by the social worker (Lymbery, 1998). This may go some way to reminding social actors that such genres of governance result in doing things in a particular way, rather than governing the way things are done. What is important to identify is how wider collective ways of talking in discursive practices result in social actors adopting subject positions in socially defined ways. Influenced by ready-made meanings that are brought to any interaction in social work, as well as the social actors' expectations about how that interaction will be played out, the discursive construction of self is formed.

However, universal categories of social work evolve and change over time. This means equally that the self can evolve and change over time and be reformed in socially defined meanings. This can be achieved by acknowledging the power of language and its historicity upon actions and interactions in social work. For Hegel ([1807], 1966) change was considered able to happen over time and he called this historical consciousness, which “was a matter of thought becoming conscious of itself through dynamic, contradictory, and interdependent processes of abstraction” (p.808). For Hegel ([1807], 1966), self-realising self-consciousness is the historical movement of abstract thought, and shows how dialectics as a method for critical social work appropriates a voice for the power of thought when faced with dilemmas and contradictions rather than ready-made discourses (Adorno, 1973).

Despite social actors having the means to access alternative positions in the dominant plot (as less heard narratives or contradictions), these are rarely identified or spoken about in state social work. Yet (as indicated by my educational experience as Senior Lecturer and by the pilot study) these contradictions are there, but not identified without encouragement and facilitation. The contradictions in the narrative plot of H showed how, on occasions, a contrast narrative was available and co-existed alongside the dominant plot. This was not overtly encouraged as a process for the subject to examine during the field work interviews; instead, as researcher I wanted to see whether those contradictions would naturally occur within the story telling process.

For example, in relation to the bureaucracy of assessment this social actor stated **‘then I had an assessment to ‘do’ and I did a little bit of that. And I ‘went’ and ‘did’ a couple of ‘support’ visits and every time I ‘went’ and did something like that, it would ‘bring’ me back up on a high’** (DT11). This contradictory plot runs alongside the dominant problem-saturated story of social work, and provides this social actor and listener with opportunities to create a dialogue surrounding an alternative construction of the professional self in state social work. A new language, based on synthesis of opposing forces and multiple positions that are available in narratives surrounding state social work in the way of researchers and educationalists encouraging critical dialogue to access these contradictions, is key to critical social

work practice (Pease and Fook 1999; Taylor and White, 2000; Hick and Murray, 2009; Fook, 2012). This is because webs of meaning that are available in organisational discourses become institutionalised and part of the grand narrative of social work, to the extent that they structure the identities and actions of social actors during social processes of identification. Stubbs (1993) points out how, entrapped by webs of meaning, “conversation is much more of a roughly prescribed ritual than most people think” (p.19).

The reliance on the representations of other voices in institutional contexts might mask a multitude of contradictions to the narrative plot. Drawing on the concept of recontextualisation (ready-made discourses stemming from the real domain) provides critical social work with a means of putting these types of discourse into a different context, and by doing so creating a new context for it (Sarangi and Coulthard, 2000). This goes some way to acknowledging that the representations of social actors employing these discourses in social work speech may, in the end, be partly responsible for producing and sustaining it (Fairclough, 1989; Sarangi and Slembrouck, 1996).

In utilising CDA to initiate organisational change in occupational cultures of social work and as a way of identifying alternative narratives of social work identity, critical social work requires a new transdisciplinary approach in the context of ‘emergence’ (Fairclough, 2005, p.932) – that is, emergence of new discourses based on transcendental arguments and dialectical philosophies in social work (education, practice and research), in order to foster the production of new articulations which can be gleaned from the problem-saturated story of social work. These are available and co-exist alongside existing orders of discourse. In trying to operationalise a new language for social work, their enactment requires new ways of (inter) acting in social work education. In the identification of how discursive practices stemming from occupational cultures foster specific identities in social work, and of their effects in the material world of practice, this type of analysis is vital in counteracting the orders of discourse inherent in social work (Fairclough, 2005). In rethinking and drawing on more locally based discourses of social work, the social actor can develop their own capacity to author the social work identity. In the reconstruction

of social selves, alongside the multitude of discourses of resistance, it seems that there is a need for genuine communication between individuals, undistorted by ideology, for collective control of their own existence (Burkitt, 1991).

Despite the preoccupation with the representation of the powerless social worker as agent, discourses here – in contradiction to the dominant problem-saturated story – show that counter-discourses do exist. These contradictions were identified and considered as the agent exercising their own narrative and professional identity (agency). For example, QP\* found ways in which to ‘fight a battle’, stating, **‘I ‘found’ that the antidote to that was the law. If you ‘said’, “Well, that’s all very well, but the law ‘says’ and if we ‘go’ against, you could end up with a judicial review.” You ‘mention judicial review and they panic’ (DT9).** Here the social actor embraces power in the Foucauldian sense, having identified their own power and personal agency on their potential rather than their limitations. This showed how knowledge was used more strategically, indicating a degree of agent causation in culture. Despite K being resigned to the fact that state social work required you to **‘just keep your head down’**, when compelled to act in the interests of service users, a less objectified and impersonalised approach was communicated. **‘I ‘did’ actually ‘approach’ them and I ‘explained’ from being previously a service user that I would have ‘been’ devastated if I ‘thought’ that they were ‘talking’ about me behind my back like that’ (K) (DT9).** Consistent with other research in social work discourses, this social actor is recounting how occupational assumptions and lay theorising in social workers’ accounts of service users are still prevalent in social work cultures today; this is despite social work’s values of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988; Hall *et al.*, 1997, 1999; Taylor and White, 2000; Riemann, 2005). Notwithstanding this, the social actor is showing the potential to exercise emergent discourses and agent causation in more localised contexts of occupational cultures – but perhaps not for long, given they reverted to a position of **‘keep your head down’** later in the narrative.



## 5.4 Clinical or Therapeutic Social Work? (DT5) (discursive practices)

Sub Themes:	Care Programme Approach versus Care Management (DT3) Medical versus Social (DT4)
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Chapter four noted how social work genres were aligned with certain practice paradigms by semiotic choices, and constituted particular sorts of social relations between interactants in the helping relationship (Fairclough, 2003). The discussion of styles showed how these were represented in accounts and dialectically internalised through investment in concepts (emotionally and cognitively), ultimately enacting out specific genres consistent with those concepts in practice. In addition these were sometimes aligned with personal characteristics of the self, such as ‘coaching’ or ‘caring’ (S). Genres, styles and discourses flow into one another in complex ways in discursive practices. The Fixers showed this complexity by the way linguistic features, such as ‘therapy’ used to ‘fix’ or to ‘treat’ in ‘crisis’, were presented in the accounts. These accounts, however, further add to the genres associated with The Fixers. This is because actors chose different terms such as ‘therapeutic’, ‘counselling’ or ‘creative’ (A\*/ QS). QS stated that when working in mental health integrated teams in adult social work **‘it almost feels more therapeutic. It’s like a mixture of almost like a counselling session with a CBT session mixed in’**, whilst A\* argued **‘well, to me you can work again very closely with the psychologist, the clinical psychologist, from a therapeutic perspective. I chose mental health because I want to go into a bit more of the counselling element of that I think at some stage’** (DT5).

The accounts of two social actors who had experienced undertaking an alternative bureau-professional framework in the way of the Care Programme Approach (CPA) documentation showed a clear preference for seeking this style and set of genres associated with social work. QS was qualified, whilst A\* was qualified/end of academic year and had gained employment in an integrated mental health team.

Consistent with the orders of discourse in the previous chapter, The Fixers (in their choice of words and verbs) demonstrated how they had compared the process of 'doing' in care management with the process of 'doing' in the CPA; the latter being viewed more favourably by these social actors (DT3). Demonstrating relational and expressive values in the accounts, the genres and choice of words such as 'counselling' and 'therapeutic' indicated which types of 'doing' were more favoured in the construction of social work. This included 'writing' assessments and care plans by hand as opposed to 'typing', which was viewed as resulting in **'having more time with service users'** (A\*) (DT3). Reflecting social actors' motivations in the social work helping relationship, this also highlighted consistency in the overall narrative plot. Showing how social actors still hold on to the micro elements of the role of social work in the construction of the helping relationship, this can equally reflect the stereotypical and post-war image of the professional elites. In stark contrast to anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice, the role of the care manager in these styles and associated genres presents the recasting of social problems as emotional or behavioural ones. It is not difficult to see why in the prevailing discourses of a therapy-based culture: as Furedi (2004) points out "western culture makes sense of social isolation through interpreting behaviour through the individualistic idiom of therapeutic discourse" (p.24).

The internal world of individuals as service users shows how the shift in focus has resulted in the decline of the sociological imagination in social work. The result is that social workers locate social problems in terms of psychological and behavioural dispositions (Furedi, 2004). Yet this one dimensional preoccupation with the self often leads to overlooking the social and cultural foundations of individual and social identities. These ideas can support the ideologies of the state in terms of self-help and self-determination through the language of therapy. The service user identity is thus objectified and the individual recast as a problematic entity (Smail, 1995; Furedi, 2004). In the context of critical social work, however, it is important to point out,

Individuals do not realise that the source of their motivation to act is social,  
that the acts they feel impelled to engage in do not well up from inside of

them, but only find their sense, meaning and motive within the overall structure of social activity and relations (Burkitt, 1991, p.158).

This medicalised order of discourse seeped into the language of social work post-war, and into these actors' ascribed genres that were aligned with counselling and creativity and supported a particular identity (style) of social work in integrated mental health teams. Even though this dominant order of discourse and style as expert goes hand in hand with the objectification and impersonalisation of service users, in mental health these types of treatment genres are preoccupied with discourses of 'risk' to self or society (Smail, 1995; Furedi, 2004). This cultivates a particular world view and set of distinct orientations (roles/genres) within social work set by government, legislative and policy frameworks. Notwithstanding this, these accounts also present a contradiction to the problem-saturated narrative. Whilst Ife (1997) suggests that the 'traditional' social work role, termed the 'therapeutic enterprise' by Harris (2008), has eroded because of social work's relationship and location with the welfare state, the accounts of these social actors state otherwise; and whether labelled as 'traditional' social work or not, it appears that social actors in this study hold on to this perceived role and locate their practice in these paradigms. In the language of evidence-based practices, it is not surprising to see why. As Webb (2002) points out, the 1990s saw evidence-based practice as the new paradigm for social work. Based on the notion of outcomes, alongside the preoccupation with risk, this emphasis on science is considered to promise security for practitioners (Trinder, 2000; Webb, 2002; Stepney, 2006). Outcomes, referring to problem resolution or enhancing functioning of the service user in behavioural terms, are only possible when an objective has been pre-set and these tend to be pre-occupied with standardisation and predictability (Jones, 2001; Webb, 2002; Stepney, 2006) (DT5).

Creativity for the critical social worker might take on another paradigm or world view. Rather than take services users' emotions as objects of management, demanding that strong emotions be curbed or moderated, critical social work might focus on the pathologising language inherent within these approaches, and identify how these genres' chains and governance can sometimes be contradictory to anti-

oppressive practice (Fook, 1996; Parton and O'Byrne, 2000; Milner, 2001; Healy, 2005; Stepney, 2006; Roscoe *et al.*, 2011). As Nietzsche (1968) points out, people usually think according to their inclinations, speak according to their learning, but act according to custom.

The emergence of a new language of creativity in social work and its meaning may go some way to expanding its construction, particularly in its narrow alignment with therapy. According to Nelson (2010), from a cultural-historical context the concept of creativity is under-examined. Creativity was deployed by one social actor incorporating the idea as a concept alongside psychological discourses. This overlooks the cultural, historical and political constitution of the concept of creativity (Nelson, 2010). For example, creativity is increasingly cited as key to social and economic change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as a form of competitive advantage (Nelson, 2010).

Often used in association with art and imagination, it is intriguing that this is aligned with therapy – particularly as CBT and motivational interviewing as methods of intervention can sometimes have a prescriptive step by step approach to building a more rounded and less emotionally disturbed human being (Parton and O'Byrne, 2000; Milner, 2001; Webb, 2006; Forrester, 2010; Roscoe and Marlow, 2013). In contrast, Kant would argue that creativity is within the mind and generated by the senses, like a blank sheet of paper on which to imprint a new image. Like the romantics, Kant ([1787] 2003) argued that creative imagination comes to be seen as a true source of genius with the embodiment of original aesthetic ideals (Nelson, 2010). This type of emergent discourse might go some way to recontextualising creative social work outside the realm of social and economic interests such as therapy and surveillance practices of the state. In summary, critical social work can illustrate how 'creativity can be understood as an invention brought about by a particular arrangement of knowledge' (Nelson, 2010, p.22). By questioning the common sense usage of creativity and therapeutic social work, emergent discourses can be reweaved between existing discourses, and new orders of discourse can be institutionalised and operationalised in social processes of identification, particularly during education (Fairclough, 2005).

Institutionalised discourses are also based on structural (binary) oppositions when it comes to working alongside health professionals (DT4). Pointing to the discursive practices operating in local cultures, this way of thinking is problematic as it sees health and social care as opposites rather than seeing how they are interrelated. This type of discourse was used mostly in conjunction with the culture embedded in care management frameworks, as opposed to social actors who were working in mental health integrated teams. In relation to care management the accounts problematised working alongside health: for example, S2 stated, **'it was more the medical model... And I felt social needs came just under, you know, it was all about medication'** (DT4). In relation to care management and re-ablement, A\* echoes the types of discourse available in care management cultures: **'I found some of the time when I was on placement, the social worker would 'look' at more the medical side instead of 'looking' at the social elements'** (DT4). This coincides with the earlier study of Hall *et al.* (1999) which highlighted that social workers appropriated legal and medical voices to support the narrative plot in casework accounting. Some of these ways of talking also manifest themselves as a way of protecting professional identities in practice and its associated values, as well as echoing the dichotomised ways in which literature has reinforced the social versus the medical model debate, disability being one example (intertextuality). As noted in the previous chapter, these binary opposed ways in which to view the activities of social work and health are considered problematic (Fook, 2012). The emergence of new and more up to date discourses in the context of health and social work forces the critical social worker to look closely at the social life of social work, to discover patterns of speaking drawn from occupational cultures (discursive practices) and reveal how these discourses can represent themselves as a somewhat restrictive set of institutional identities within the narrative plot (Roberts and Sarangi, 1995).

## 5.5 Good and Bad Social Work: The discursive construction of self and the 'other' (DT10) as discursive practices

Sub Themes:	Good and Bad Social Work (DT10a) Case Genre (DT10b)
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**'I got advice by this person who was bored everyday 'saying' this, "I don't know why you bother him with this all theory and because when you are a social worker, all you do is 'tick' boxes and sit behind a desk' (H).**

The account above shows what types of organisational discourse operate within state social work. This account echoes wider research in social work which depicted how lay theorising is deployed in the context of bureau-professional frameworks and state social work (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988; Taylor and White, 2000; Riemann, 2005; Scourfield and Pithouse, 2006). Whether considered as good or bad social work, it shows what kinds of knowledge base this ideology and its frameworks purport. Yet lay theorising goes hand in hand with common sense approaches, objectification and impersonalisation processes complementing discourses that sustain and surround categorising of service users through accounting practices (Hall *et al.*, 1999). As the previous chapter noted, it is vital that common sense or taken for granted assumptions are subject to critical interrogation in critical social work (Gramsci, 1971). Further quotes indicated that this type of social work was considered as bad social work: for example, **'We did a case 'discussion' and it was very much everyone 'giving' their personal opinions because they've known the family and known the parents. It was all very much personal and not professional opinions'** (K). Showing resonance with Riemann's (2005) research, the casework account was surrounded by social workers who were evidently getting trapped and showing an inability to obtain analytical distance in their work (DT10a).

The good and bad social worker was a way in which social actors in this study ascribed certain social characteristics to the social identity of social work through their word choices. These included the notion of 'commitment', or whether they were 'interested' or showing 'involvement'. The way in which one social actor articulated the culture of state social work was that all work was seen as '**an extra work-load**' (J2) (DT10a).

In the recounting of organisational culture, when depicting these experiences, social actors deployed the pronoun 'they'. This captured the social distancing tactics that had been deployed in the social actor's representation of social work to the interviewer/researcher. Illustrating what type of ideological squaring had taken place, the abstractions and values placed on 'commitment' 'involvement' and showing 'interest' in J2's account implied what was considered as good social work (van Dijk, 2011). Yet the capitalist properties inherent in these concepts might point more to the ideologies that have interpellated the subject than be a true representation of the other [social worker]. The social nature of shared abstractions such as 'commitment' show how any social character aligned with social identity implicitly points to a set of values and beliefs drawn from wider forces. These forms of squaring (measuring up) bring with them associations of values, ideas and activities which are intrinsically linked with occupational discourses associated with mechanistic structures in a capitalist society (Morgan, 2006). These reflect patterns of social order as common ideals, and include beliefs and values of individualism, hard work and above all else the rewards of materiality and possession of specific commodities (Marcuse, 1972).

For critical social work, this view of the social character of social work is understood as dialectically interconnected with material elements of the real domain (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999; Fairclough, 2001). This is because the production of social life is based within the articulations of a capitalist social world which produces relatively stable configurations such as notions of 'commitment' and 'reward'. This type of analysis of 'ideology is strongly materialist in its conception of the relationship between the physical and the moral' (Kennedy, 1979, p.355).

Critical social work which also embraces radical structuralism (in the identification of ideological squaring and social distancing strategies) requires a dialectical analysis, and in this case draws on a Marxist ([1846] 1972) lens of analysis. That is, that the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness such as 'commitment' can be directly interwoven with the material activities and material intercourses to which social actors are socialised (Marcuse, 1972). The deconstruction of one's own cultural illusions of what constitutes a good social worker might go some way to raising awareness of how individuals construct others based on values, principles and ideas inherently stemming from the society in which they exist.

### **5.6 Good and Bad Social Work: Case Genre (DT10b)**

Within social work case talk, accounts surrounding casework are crafted into narratives which involve and represent more than just the personal reflection and involvement of a practitioner with a service user (Hall *et al.*, 1999). Practitioners' narratives begin by emphasising and constructing a history of their interaction with the service user or case representing a particular narrative structure (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988; Riemann, 2005): the practitioners' crafted accounts of casework encompassed a plot or theme which problematised particular aspects of the case (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988; Hall *et al.*, 1997, 1999; Riemann, 2005). Similar to previous studies in accounting practices in social work, the social actors' case narratives here were not dissimilar in text structure. For example, social actors mostly started with the context and narrative of their interaction with the service user: **'well, I 'went' on an assessment with one of the social workers, and this old lady just 'wanted 'to 'talk' and it was...'** (J2). Another example shows this succinctly: **'There's one service user in particular. She'd been 'living' in community housing in a project for about 17-18 years...'** (R\*).

What social actors had considered as bad practice drawn from their occupational socialisation, the casework genre (whilst discussing the service user as the main character) problematised the interactions of other social workers. These types of genre are understood as both a product of and a process by which social workers



engage in organisational activity (Mumby, 1988). Goodwin (1994) draws attention to the discursive dimensions of professional ways of seeing. Different professional groups will categorise and employ genres in particular accounting practices (Hall *et al.*, 1999). The case genre fits nicely with casework, showing how this particular way of interacting in social work encompasses wider societal discourses that pre-exist the practitioner.

The professional account offered by the social actor was used to persuade the listener (by being coherent with what was implicitly implied as bad social work) and appeared like a report, in that their interactional moves (as themselves) would have been or were different to that of the other they described [social worker]. For example, 'She [other social worker] **didn't want to 'change' things** either because things **were 'running' quite smoothly** as they were'. These were linked to knowledge formulations drawn from professional values such as listening and being non-judgmental. Yet these formulations can be argued to encompass rhetorical devices, and this case genre account involves the use of specific words in order to be persuasive and justify a particular plot (Pithouse and Atkinson, 1988; Hall *et al.*, 1997, 1999; Riemann, 2005). The case genre involved social distancing tactics by the use of 'I', 'she' or 'them' throughout. This showed how the categorisation of self and others was taking place in terms of group membership (social identity of social work).

Social actors depersonalised these behaviours and their feelings in these accounts by introducing contextually relevant categories or attributes which they aligned with the characteristics of good social work (Wetherell *et al.*, 1987; Hogg, 1996). This resulted in uncertainty and the search for meaning in the context of what was considered good or bad social work. Social actors will create an opportunity to surface a discussion in the way of seeking agreement with their view by similar others. This reduces their uncertainty and increases their conformity or not to group norms they experienced in practice (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Turner, 1991; McGarty, Turner, Oakes and Haslam, 1993).

As a means of representing how these practices conflicted with values and characteristics aligned to the social identity of social work, this had inevitably created discomfort for the subject as observer. For example, K recounted how one social worker stated **'Who's doing smelly's house today?'** Showing how service users in this context were often categorised in negative terms by other social workers, this theme was consistent with the research of Hall *et al.* (1999), which explored client categorisation and the underpinning moral and value judgements contained within them.

The deconstruction of the narrative structure of case genres permits this study to consider the identity of both sets of social actors and what positions are assumed within the narrative. It also provides a way in which to analyse how local practices operate in discursive practices (Phoenix, 2008 in Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou). In analysing the narrative context and text structure, the social and cultural characters that are presented manifest themselves as key narratives for social actors to recount. This narrative is often produced as a well-worn account which is used to justify and explain (inter) actions, decisions and values in the narrative plot. These can be seen as stories of experience rather than treating them as if they are straightforward descriptions of events (Squire, 2008 in Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou). This represents a move away from the study as 'text' to the study of narrative-in-context. This provides critical social work with insights into the dilemmas and troubled subject positions speakers negotiate as they tell their stories during social processes of identification (Billig, 1991; Wetherell, 1998). As Ricoeur (1984) and Bruner (1990) point out, narratives convey experience through reconstituting it, resulting in multiple and changeable storylines (Squire, in Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2013).

The social actors who deployed case genres (5) were in year two of their three year degree, and so polar opposites of what might be expected to constitute good and bad social workers are to be expected given this stage of their education. This is because the notion of synthesis in the way of critical analysis is viewed as a year three outcome when set against the levels outlined in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (QAA, 2008a) and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher

Education for Social Work (QAA, 2008b). Notwithstanding this, critical social work and the deconstruction of poor practice observations drawn from occupational cultures provides a rich framework with which to explore how case genres point to values, beliefs and knowledge formations of both the self and the representation of the other. This is because if social actors open up the case genre using deconstruction, they will find a set of questions about their own knowledge base and wider context of the work they do, and how these are often embedded within institutional genres and activities (Roberts and Sarangi, 1995; Jones, 2001; Webb, 2003; White and Harris, 2007).

Story deconstruction of the case genre narrative can be used as a resource for the practice teacher supervising students on placements, as well as lecturers when interacting with students. In recounting practice stories following socialisation in occupational cultures, story deconstruction guidelines as presented by Boje (2001) provide students and practitioners with opportunities to engage in critical dialogue in the way of unpacking the case genre. Where the social actor is faced with uncertainty in their subjectivity or with ethical dilemmas in the way of bad practice scenarios, this form of deconstruction provides critical social work with a way to utilise narrative methods for studying organisational discourses. This includes various accounting practices/exchanges alongside analysing historical and ideological properties that are inherent in knowledge formations in social work. In order to foster a recontextualisation process, the eight stage deconstruction process and framework below can become a key resource for learners, practitioners, educationalists and researchers. In essence, this framework guided the deconstruction of the problem-saturated story of social work presented in this chapter. The methods are briefly summarised below.

## 5.7 Narrative Methods for Social Work Education: Deconstructing Discourse

1.	Identify dualistic constructions and polar positions in the case genre or discourses under study.
2.	Reinterpret the order of discourse, i.e. how this interpretation of the event is considered as one point of view.
3.	Deny the authority of one voice over another, and identify which voices are subordinate or not talked about.
4.	Look at the other side of the story and identify the other side of the story, and what is marginalised.
5.	Deny the plot and identify how dominant plots construct the subject and the 'other' in the narrative presentation. Consider the background assumptions which support the narrative plot.
6.	Find the contradiction to the narrative by identifying how marginalised narratives co-exist alongside the dominant plot in the way of emergent discourses.
7.	Identify what is in-between the lines (what is inferred).
8.	Recontextualise or resituate the narrative. The story is encouraged to go beyond dualisms and singular viewpoints.

(Adapted from Boje, 2001 p. 21).

Text structures as a form of case genre are types of accounting practice that manifest themselves at local levels in a multitude of social work contexts. This narrative and type of storytelling of the occupational case is a genre as it involves argument, description and conversations (Fairclough, 2003) which transcend particular social practices (see transcript, appendix G p.321 as one example). Reflecting wider discourses stemming from casework genres which are inherent in a range of health and social care settings as part of their institutional activity (Hall *et al.*, 1997, 1999), these accounting practices showed how during social processes of identification students had adopted these ways of talking in their day to day experiences and their reflection about what constituted good or bad social work (in their view).

## 5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has deconstructed the problem-saturated narrative surrounding the identity of contemporary social work. It has considered how recontextualisation of these discourses and their operationalisation can be developed by identifying emergent discourses that co-exist alongside orders of discourse. In the way of identifying contradictions to the dominant plot, through the analysis of how discourses are consumed, distributed and reproduced by social actors in occupational cultures, this chapter explored, through the concept of organisational discourses, how these influenced subjectivity (subject positions) and the discursive construction of the professional self. Presenting an overall theme of powerlessness within this research, social actors mainly constructed contemporary social work in care management in specific and negative ways. Rarely identifying positives and their own contradictions to their story, this showed the power of discursive practices at work infiltrating the subject in specific ways. Such a dialectical analysis provides critical social work research with strategies for changing and analysing discursive practices in social work cultures.

Fairclough (2005) suggests a framework for how organisational change can be addressed specifically by discourse analysts who employ transdisciplinary research. This addresses four key areas which have been discussed throughout this chapter: emergence, hegemony, recontextualisation and operationalisation. Translated into organisational change at the education and practice levels in social work, emergent discourses can be institutionalised over time; the process is conditional on whether the strategy proposed is incorporated and considered a positive and useful one (Iedema, Degeling, Braithwaite and White, 2004). The critical social work educationalist who takes an activist position in the face of hegemonic discourses analyses their subsequent effects and facilitates a critical dialogue to encourage an alternative type of scaffold that embraces the more marginalised accounts of social work. In other words, new discourses can contribute to new discursive practices, which can then in turn contribute to change in social practices and structures. For example, feminism can be seen as one of the prime examples of how discursive

practices through collective action (agent causation) can have an overall effect at the structural level (legislation and policy change).

Whilst this can be seen by some critics as naive and as a type of social work removed from the harsh realities of contemporary practice and its associated pressures, the social actors in this study showed how, through the discourse themes identified, the narrative of social work remains mostly static and problem-saturated; this is just as it was ten years ago when I was in practice, but then so is community care and its governing ideology.

Where the concept of emergence encourages social actors to be the author of their own story, the marginal can then become the mainstream; this is based on the assumption that a critical perspective is needed analysing the structure of the narrative. This acknowledges how these ways of talking reflect the struggle between different social actors, and how these create meaning systems. In these meaning systems, certain views of the world are privileged over others. Thus it can be argued that the dominant narrative that stems from the collective voice of adult social workers in care management creates its own ideological meaning system, and this serves its own interests in resisting bureau-professional frameworks that govern social work activity. Yet the identification of chains of genres and governance interpellating the subject in the context of powerlessness gives the critical social worker opportunities to identify how discourses of resistance impact upon the action and the subject positions adopted within the discourse. The overall way in which the agent as social worker was presented in these accounts presents a picture of powerlessness: not being able to change anything, 'put up and shut up', as well as keeping your head down. These ways of (inter) acting in social work might not provide those it intends to benefit with much hope in the helping relationship.

Notwithstanding this, contradictions as emergent discourses were available in social work in this study, and so the fostering of the identification of self-realising self-consciousness during social processes of identification is considered as paramount to social work education. This is because new ways of knowing in social work, in terms of rethinking ideas and abstractions, encourage diverse ways in which social

actors understand and make knowledge (Fook, 2012). Critical social work practice and research, however, transcends previous boundaries and ways of knowing in social work.

This chapter has also illuminated how narrative and discourse analysis can be used as a tool and resource for one another in the critical deconstruction of discourses available in social work. Supporting a transdisciplinary language for social work, this type of creativity fosters innovative theory production and formation. As noted earlier 'creativity can be understood as an invention brought about by a particular arrangement of knowledge' (Nelson, 2010, p.22). This supports a truly dialectical theory for social work, which transcends itself from philosophical dualisms such as idealism-materialism in order to encourage social actors to construct a total conception of the social world of social work (Gramsci, 1971). In the analysis of ideology of hegemony in the welfare state, education and social work itself, new lenses of analysis and language for critical social work can embrace a Hegelian-Marxist approach to reality. What this means is that reality is assumed not to just exist on its own account in a strict materialist sense, but also to exist in a historical relationship with those who modify and interpret it (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

Marx critiqued how Hegel objectified human consciousness as a result of attributing abstract ideas with historical agency, arguing that ideals are nothing more than abstract empty forms of living (Fairclough and Graham, 2002); for Hegel he saw individual consciousness as a focal point for understanding the nature of the social world. To reject Hegel's principle outright seems an obscure position from critical realists who endeavour to engender change through praxis. Marxists on the other hand argue that the content of ideals is only considered to be abstract; they are thought to be categories from the mind, so are considered as separate to real nature (Fairclough and Graham, 2000). Contradictory to notions of feminism, which were based on the ideals of equality as one example, consciousness raising through the advocacy of abstract ideals can sometimes become part of reality in the real domain through collective agent causation. Showing how idealism in its abstract form might have a more favourable archaeology of hope for social workers during

social processes of identification as opposed solely to materialism, for Hegel consciousness and the external world are viewed as two sides of the same reality.

As such, this research adopts a Hegelian-Marxist approach to understanding idealism, materialism and history. This is because Hegel's use of the notion of 'the idea' (idealism) is what would be understood in today's language as asserting agency rather than a 'real subject' as such. The subject is considered to become differentiated, and this is where various elements of the superstructure such as religion and the state are viewed as the prime media through which human consciousness is moulded and shaped. This is because the underlying unity of dialectical philosophy focuses upon human consciousness within the context of totality and how social actors can sometimes feel trapped within the mode of social organisation which they both create and sustain in their lives (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Howe, 1987). This view supports Althusser's work as well as Hegelian principles because of the notion of totality and dialectics (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). It also shows how CDA in this study advocates interdisciplinary dialogue rather than strict divisions of research paradigms, and aims to explore the commonalities and practicalities of these theorists in the context of critical social work (O'Conner, in Weiss and Wodak, 2003).

In order to employ a problem-oriented approach to research in critical social work, through the process of raising consciousness (psychological consciousness as well as consciousness during the performance of acts in social work), this chapter has provided ways in which to deconstruct the various genres and styles that operate within discursive practices in social work culture. This dialectical analysis has shown how the real, actual and empirical domains are interrelated and have specific material effects; the following chapter proposes a framework to encourage a more varied narrative of the social work identity, one which identifies the contradictions inherent within problem-saturated social work and adopts a dialectical framework in doing so. This can also be utilised as a method for identifying motivation and styles in social work, and deconstructing their inherent contradictions in conjunction with anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice.



This will expose the more marginalised identities of social work, as well as fostering independent thought that encourages more innovation in the construction of the helping relationship. This may go some way to creating a new space for more creative and innovative formulations of the identity of social work (as well as those who social work intends to benefit). In fostering dialectical thought (during social processes of identification and social work) which is based on the philosophy of praxis, this research stresses the importance of social actors' practical involvement and engagement in a dialogue that destabilises the power of the 'problem-saturated story'. This includes identification of how political ideology, its power and its effects influence the construction of the personal and professional self.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions, Recommendations and Reflections.**

### **6.1. Introduction**

This chapter summarises and evaluates the research conclusions by focusing on the key points identified in chapters four and five of this thesis. These chapters extended Fairclough's CDA in the context of discursive and social practices through the use of critical theories. This chapter also revisits how these discourses reflect previous research studies in discourse analytic social work and reviews how this study has met its original aims and objectives.

This conclusion includes further recommendations for research in the exploration of social works professional identity during processes of identification (socialisation) utilising CDA in occupational cultures in Wales (adult services). As well as discussing the limitations of this study, the chapter concludes with summarising the theoretical framework utilised in this study and further explains the reflexive method/model for social work education and critical social work practice (in the context of self-awareness). This demonstrates the practical application of narrative and discourse-analytic tools in exploring discourses of social work (in any given occupational culture). The original contribution to knowledge is also outlined in this conclusion by placing their number adjacent to the discussion (originally outlined on page 62).

The objectives of the research are outlined in brackets (e.g. Objective 1) and again are placed adjacent to the discussion. Throughout this conclusion, the data is described in the way of discourse topics (DT) consistent with the earlier presentation of data and the initials of respondents such as (H) further evidence the discourse/s discussed. Those marked with \* indicate male in the sample and each DT is accompanied with signposting of which chapter it was originally analysed and discussed (four or five).

The overall aim of this research was to critically analyse and explore how social workers (operating in the adult social work practice domain) draw on wider social

(and social work) discourses in accounting for the work that they do. By synthesising Bhaskar's (1989) Tri-Partite model of understanding society, alongside Fairclough's (1992) Three Dimensional Model (see methodology chapter alongside four and five); the dialectical relationship between styles (ways of being) and genres (ways of acting) in social work were examined. Against the backdrop of their historical, cultural and ideological origins (social practices/narratives), this intertextual lens provided a way in which to consider how these discourses included wider social (orders of) discourses in contrast to anti-oppressive/discriminatory principles and ethics in practice (Objective 1). Illuminating how these discourses stem from historical, cultural and structural discourses, this research was based on a critique of the past as well as the present discourses surrounding social works identity.

The overall objectives to this study were:

- 1) To critically analyse and explore the discourses on which student and social work practitioners draw on in their accounts of social work practice;
- 2) To identify and critically analyse the subject positions and discursive practices (collective ways of speaking) of social workers in respect of these discourses;
- 3) To critically analyse how and in what way social workers at different stages of the career trajectory draw differently upon these discourses;
- 4) To critically analyse and evaluate the implications for practice and service users of the respondents subject positioning and discursive practices that they employ and,
- 5) Develop a critically reflexive model of social work, based on empirical findings in order to make recommendations for research, education and critical social work practice (in the context of self-awareness).

'The Fixers' (as the dominant order of discourses surrounding social work) runs right through the caring enterprise and history of social work (see literature review). This demonstrated how certain ideological traditions of evidence-based rhetoric interpellated social actors construction of social work during social processes of identification (chapter four DT 1, 2, 3). Constructed around one-to-one casework,

this reflected the micro-and pragmatic motivations in working with service users (see accounts of H, J, S\* P, A\*, J2, S3, QS, R\* QP\*). Thus the main social casework approach in social work to date is still constructed around something to 'fix' or 'sort out' in a 'crisis' (chapter four, DT2 and 3). In effect, these accounts assumed a position of expertise for the social work role and the service user was primarily viewed as an entity that needed to be 'fixed' (chapter four, DT 6 and 7). In some cases, social actors used the words 'treatment' (J) and 'to catch them early' (P) echoing some medicalised and wider social orders of discourse. The literature review noted how psycho-social and behavioural paradigms were favoured by social workers in children and families, thus it is not surprising to see social actors deploy these knowledge formations and language (signs) (Scourfield and Pithouse 2007). This complements prevailing contemporary discourses of working with service users through the lens of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or Motivational Interviewing (A\*, QS) (see Roscoe and Marlow 2013). Interrelated and reinforced in policy rhetoric and discourses of 'evidence-based practice interventions' (Webb 2002; Stepney 2006, Roscoe and Marlow 2013), these signs show what kinds of genres are re-enacted at the discursive (cultural) level in social work. In effect, these genres result in a particular style (identity) aligned to social work and service users embedded with taken for granted assumptions of a form of expertise (Objective 1,2, and 3).

By way of deploying a commonly heard metaphor (in the language associated with the caring enterprise), social actors in this study constructed social works activity as primarily something that 'makes a difference' (DT 9) in people's lives based on expertise help and one-to-one casework (Objective 1 and 4). The individual treatment model is prevalent in British society, and as Schur (1965) points out, this is underpinned by psychological and behavioural theories that assume any individual difficulties are based on the special characteristics of the individual. Preventative measures are viewed as the cure and according to Cohen (1975) this fosters discourses of individualised casework (Cohen, 1975 in Bailey and Brake 1975). Often referred to in literature within the language of problem solving casework, this is traceable in the international definition of social work which states that social work:

...promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being (International Federation of Social workers, 2000, p. 1).

Thus it can be argued that social actors in this study interpreted social works activity and role quite accurately given the above definition. Problem solving discourses of treatment (based on the functionalist body of knowledge in social work) is not necessarily the 'wrong way' for the service user despite the structure/agency debate. This research rejects such an 'either/or' representation of knowledge and approaches in social work theories (Kierkegaard, 1993) and assumes that such dualistic constructions only reinforce the idea of social work as a fragmented and profession that 'has lost its way'. Instead, a transdisciplinary language is supported in social work education and theories, combined in particular ways to foster emergent and more localised discourses of the social work identity. That is because this epistemology assumes a variety of interpretations are available in the co-constructed identity and narrative of social work suggesting that practitioners can become their own author of their social work identity (Objective 2). Marginalised discourses surrounding state social work are indeed possible; the pilot study confirmed how, once identified by the facilitator who utilises this methodology (p.263), contradictions can be identified as new insights and integrated alongside dominant and powerful orders of discourses (see appendix E , slides 7 and 8 and DT 11, DT5).

This research has also highlighted just how much social work encompasses labelling/ objectification processes in its accounting practices. Based on the categorisation of service user groups within social works institutional context (chapter four DT 5, 7 and 10), this manifested itself in the way of social actors pronoun use in the use of 'them' indicating a sense of impersonalisation and objectification of the individual as service user (Chapter four, DT 1, 2, 3, 7, 10 and chapter five DT 5, 8 and 10).

Such genres of 'them' stem from knowledge formations and history within social works categorisation processes (Roberts and Sarangi, 1995). Thus in order to

counteract powerful cultural ways of diagnosing and analysing social problems, critical social work is critical of its established institutions and associated practices. This is because the work of Giroux (1981) reminds us that agents are capable of transforming institutions and its associated practices (genres) (Objective 3).

This research emphasises the influence of wider cultural and social practices that interpellated the subject during social processes of identification (prior to socialisation and following practice and education settings - Objective 2 and 3). Whether notions of one-to-one client or person-centred social work, according to Carey (2012) are based on romantic notions of social work, they do encompass multi-layers of ideals and ethics. To only ever consider the opposite is to only ever reach antithesis. In doing so, one never reaches synthesis and so the struggle and identity crisis continue and sustain one another as the 'problem-saturated story' on the ground floor (Objective 1).

Whilst some might argue that the realities of social work solely encompasses the role of the social worker as purchaser of services only (as a 'service led' process), asserting that social workers should focus on service users' needs aligned with practical/material assistance rather than to fight oppression; such a 'blanket' statement can only mask the diversity of roles, imagination and skills utilised within adult state social work.

Whether person-centred social work is considered 'romantic' of which is considered as solely based on abstract ideals, social actors do hold onto specific constructions of social work throughout their education and practice journey. The two social actors who opted for mental health social work drew on discourses of therapeutic and creative social work. This showed a preferred style of social work in comparison to care management (Objective 4). Whilst these two social actors discussed strategies for overcoming the language of bureaucracy and its associated constraints, year two respondents alongside QP\* grappled with notions of 'person-centred' (KL), 'I wanted to be by their side' (H) and frequently used the word 'shock' (KL, H, J) to articulate their cultural experiences of care management (Objective 2 and 3).

Many research studies have echoed how social actors hold onto (what could be argued as) cultural illusions (false consciousness) of social work, but the extent to which this original construction is held onto throughout social processes of identification needs to be further explored in social work research and education. Adopting a longitudinal methodology (with larger samples), analysing how the construction of social work changes or is held onto by social actors, would build on exploring the power of discourses and the interpellation of ideology. This is because the meta-narrative surrounding social work shows how practitioners advocate 'traditional' or 'relationship based' (Lavalette and Ferguson, 2007; Ferguson and Woodward, 2009), 'one-to-one', 'client-centred' (Carey 2012) or psychodynamic practice (Scourfield and Pithouse 2006). Often aligned with the social actor's personal identity such as 'coaching' (S\*), these ideals result in cognitive, emotional and existential investment based on the characteristics and qualities attributes to the role of the social worker (experiential and relational values).

Yet the ideals of social work such as anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice do have a long way to go, but the most important aspect of social work education is for the subject to identify how ideology interpellated their constructions of social work at the cognitive-practical level (Objective 1). In the report reviewing social work education, Narey (2014) argued that he 'had been troubled' by the politics of such social work teaching (anti-oppressive practice) because one newly qualified social worker (during his review) had argued that the concentration on anti-oppressive practice was at the expense of understanding the practicalities of the job. Whilst this study questions these aspects of social work ideals, they have a prominent place in education underpinning contemporary ethics, values and the social work identity.

Whilst considerable attention was given to radical social work in data discussion, discourse analysts stress the need to expose and discuss the marginalised or what is not said (Fairclough, 2005; Fook, 2012; Machin and Mayr 2012). The dominant language of 'The Fixers' spoke volumes of the way in which social work had been constructed showing limited awareness of the socio-political context (chapter four, DT 2 and 3, chapter five DT 5) (Objective 1). The regulators of social work in Wales

(Care Council for Wales) in National Occupational Standards, alongside the Quality Assurance Agency (2008) benchmark statements for social work education explicitly use concepts such as human rights, social justice, anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory practice. Yet despite critical theories underpinning social work education, these ideas (post-socialisation) were marginalised in these accounts of social work. This showed how the dominant order of discourse in the way of 'The Fixers' had interpellated the subject in their wider social, educational and practice contexts.

Webb and Grey (2013) argue that social work is based on a renewal of progressive left agenda in the event of challenging exploitative regimes inherited through capitalist class and neo-liberal economic order. Whilst there was some evidence of radical concepts such as advocacy and 'help versus limitations', this research argued how language aligned with radical ideas such as 'fight the state' are products of discourses of resistance as well as discourses of reconstitution (Objective 1 and 2). Stemming from arguments of dialectical materialism, discourses of resistance are one of many important voices of critical social work.

On the other side of the coin, discourses of resistance were argued (in this research) as reconstituted through the discursive level in 'either/or' ways. Affecting agent causation in practice (in the way of alienation, apathy and a sense of powerlessness) (Objective 2 and 4), these arguments can also fail to acknowledge the multiple positions available within the meta-narrative (order of discourses) surrounding state social work. Often assumed as taken for granted based on the notion that the state always poses limitations for service users (S\*, QS, J); this is despite two social actors in this study who implied state social work was not always a negative entity as they both used the phrase 'to put something back into the system' (J2 and K) as part of their motivation for entering the profession. This was identified as another contradiction to the problem-saturated narrative and was based on personal experiences of social work as a 'child looked after' as one example (chapter five DT 11) (Objective 1 and 2).



Social work is interdependent on the social construction of social problems which is exasperated by its location to the welfare state. It manages often complex and contradictory identities resulting in social actors re-interpreting these ideas with wider practice discourses stemming from the ground floor. Manifesting themselves as dichotomies in this research, such as 'medical versus social' (chapter five DT 4) or 'help versus limitations' (chapter four, DT8); these ways of talking were argued to become part of the consciousness of social actors at the cultural level. Thus, this research has duly analysed the implications of dualistic, binary oppositions or dichotomous ways of viewing the world of social work. This further illustrates how CDA and dialectical theories offer social work pragmatic strategies for challenging existing language conventions and narratives of social work (Objective 2).

Fook (2012) has cautioned the use of binary opposite ways in which to view social work, but this research argues that these ways of thinking reflect social actor's confusion with some of the contradictions surrounding the social work identity and role. This research purports that these contradictions are somewhat logical in social work and provides opportunities for the identification of emergent discourses in the construction (interpretation) of social works identity; assuming social actors exercise their own power and agency in recontextualising contemporary practice.

The wider neo-liberalist and managerialist ideology (real domain) in which social work is located was represented in this research as 'the problem- saturated narrative' in chapter five. This reflected how social actor's had made sense of adult practice experiences in their wider cultural, socio-political and historical context. The main order of discourse (titled 'The Cultural and Ideological struggle' DT1) was argued to have become the widely accepted discourse of resistance available in social work cultures. Paradoxically, this order of discourse was also argued as constituting taken for granted properties in the text. These dominant discourses had infiltrated the social actor's thoughts and practice in particular ways (powerlessness and not able to change anything); this has consequences in practice for the service user (Objective 3 and 4). These accounts of adult social work (post-socialisation) deployed almost the exact terms and word choices such as 'deskilled' to represent contemporary care management identified in the surrounding

literature (Jones 2001; Postle, 2001, 2002; Carey 2008a, 2012). Words like 'bureaucracy' showed the material effects of bureau-professional frameworks (managerialist ideology) interpellating the subject in specific ways at the cultural level (subject positioning). Being powerless, representing dualistic constructions and not considered as able to change anything showed how this research committed to analysing the accounts of adult social work in their whole context. In using Fairclough's (1992) CDA three-dimensional analysis, this research has analysed the subject positions and discursive practices (collective ways of talking) inherent within the overall 'problem-saturated narrative' (text structure). It has done so by considering the cause and effect (dialectical) properties within the text. As a result, this study argues for the development of emergent and marginalised narratives of adult social work in social work education in the way of what is not said or marginalised.

The 'problem-saturated narrative' of social work inherent in the accounts of adult practice showed nothing new of just how care management was viewed as mainly bureaucratic (H, A\*, R\*, KL, K, J2, QS, , S2, J2) and not person-centred (K, A\*, H). Two social actors who had chosen to work in integrated mental health teams (A\* and QS) based this rationale on 'having more time with service users' (QS and A\*).

There were some contradictions in the overall problem-saturated narrative (DT9) and this research (by exploring agent causation and local cultural change) illustrated how this was despite notions of powerlessness or 'put up and shut up'. Consistent with data drawn from the pilot study of a cohort of year three learners (n=30), this showed how the synthesis of two opposing concepts can lead to a new interpretation (recontextualisation or synthesis) of dominant orders of discourses (Objective 2 and 5). This aspect of the research gave additional insight into how social actors grappled with processes of identity construction during their socialisation with practice settings by exercising agency to challenge what they considered as bad practice (Objective 3).

Whilst language such as bureaucracy, deskilled and paper work are discourses of resistance based on the managerialist and neo-liberalist state, they are argued in

this research to be reconstituted in particular ways resulting in specific (inter-) actions at the cultural level. These discourses were argued in this study to encompass a double edged sword in local authority cultures; its material effects result in a type of exercise of power over the social actor (chapter five, DT 1) but only in the sense that the social actor ascribes to or adopts these discourses (whether consciously or unconsciously). As a result, these discourses result in a type of power that embodies a 'dialectical of control' in the sense of human agency and action (Mumby and Stohl, 1991, p.317) of which can result in apathy, cynicism and a sense of powerlessness (i.e. not being able to change anything) (Objective 1, 2, 3). Containing structured meanings of practice that result in well-established genres, this study argued that social actor's re-present discourses by including or excluding certain ones. They order the discourses available in particular ways and inevitably encompass the voices of others (intertextuality) (Objective 3). Narrated mostly by way of deploying metaphors embodying their existential experience (chapter four: DT 9, chapter five: DT 6, 7), these represented the social actor's thoughts and feelings during social processes of identification (Machin and Mayr, 2012).

These metaphors reinforced the dominant plot in the overall problem-saturated narrative presented, and the social actor was sometimes left managing a multitude of contradictions creating uncertainty (see KL transcript). Yet instead of focusing on powerlessness (as the social actor perceived it), the surfacing of contradictions in the overall narrative encourages a recontextualising process of just how powerful the social actor can be (Objective 3 and 5). In order to negate the power and effects of ideology in the way of genre chains and governance on the subject, the authoring of one's own narrative in the face of hegemonic discourses was argued to be more of an achievement than a right in this research (Ackelsberg, 1997; Monk *et al.*, 1997; White 2005). This is because wider collective ways of talking in discursive practices result in social actors adopting subject positions in socially defined ways. Thus notions of powerlessness, 'put up and shut up', 'head down' and 'can't change anything' was argued not to provide much hope for those individuals social work intends to benefit (DT 7) (Objective 2 and 4).

In challenging the material effects of ideology, creativity for the critical social worker in this research was emphasised on the need for social work to take on another paradigm or world view. Rather than take the emotions of services user's as objects of management in the way of the fixers discourse, the emergence of a new language (a type of creativity) is advocated. Creativity is considered as an invention brought about by a particular arrangement of knowledge (Nelson, 2010) and, by questioning its usage (alongside therapeutic social work), emergent discourses in the way of an interdisciplinarity language can be operationalised in social work theories in education (Fairclough, 2005) (Objective 5).

Narrative and discourse-analytic tools were argued as useful for deconstructing the case genre in this research. During storytelling processes of practice experiences, notions of what was considered as 'good and bad' , the case genre in social work can identify shared abstractions (or part truth's) of practice (such as notion of 'commitment'). These can also be used to explore (in social work education) personal values, beliefs, social ideals and morals (Objective 5). Here, the social actor is encouraged to identify how their constructions have wider ideological origins (such as capitalism - see discussion on DT 10a and b) and how these influence their own thoughts and ideas of others. The social actor here learns of themselves as well as the 'other' they present. This facilitates, through the application of narrative and discourses analytic tools, an exploration of the relationship between the personal and professional/political self (3) and provides both practice educators in social work (as well as practitioners), the opportunity to analyse case genres and text structures promoting self-awareness in the context of critical social work practice (5).

To summarise, in taking apart the case genre, this provides a way in which to analyse how local practices operate in cultural practices of social work (Phoenix, in Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2008). They illustrate what ideological squaring tactics have or are taking place in the 'here and now'. The text structure (case genre) showed how the social and cultural character of those who are presented takes on the form of a key narrative for social actors' to recount. Encompassing a type of storytelling as an occupational activity, these accounts involved argument,

description and conversations pointing to wider cultural and social practices; this is a useful tool for reflexivity in social work education (Objective 2 and 5).

Constructions of good and bad social work also showed how the application of formal knowledge was taking place within wider social work occupational cultures (according to the social actor). With the exception of practice teachers (mentors) (see KL, appendix F), formal knowledge in social work showed resonance with lay theorising processes (taken for granted discourses) (H, KL, K). When describing the application of theory or 'expert theorising' in the wider culture, the following account summed this up succinctly. 'I don't know why you bother him with all this theory... all you do is 'tick' boxes...' (H). Moreover, the moral construction of the service user was also evident in this research consistent with wider literature (such as 'whose doing smelly's house today' (K) (see the work of Hall *et al.*, 1999; Riemann, 2005). Social actor in this study constructed this in conjunction with 'good or bad' social work against values of anti-oppressive/discriminatory practice (K, OP\* R\*). On the other hand, expert theorising in this study resonated with Bull and Shaw's (1992) research all those years ago highlighting how social work embraces the most popular (order of discourse) at any given time. In this research, this manifested itself in the way of CBT or 'therapy' in adult social work. Practice in care management under Unified Assessment specifically, was viewed mainly as problem-saturated and considered not in line with policy rhetoric of person-centred care littered throughout health and social care (KL). These discourses inherent in the problem –saturated story of social work add to discourse studies in social work particularly in the context of adult practice and Unified Assessment (2).

Even though Scourfield and Pithouse's (2006) study showed how psychodynamic theories were favoured in children and families social work resonating with the construction of P and K in the context of 'therapy' (so that 'families rub along a bit better'), orders of discourses in adult social work also favoured a more 'therapeutic' approach which was often assumed as creative (A\* and QS). What was not said in the way of expert theorising in care management articulated how the ideology of managerialism had eroded any notion of therapeutic or creative interventions within this bureau-professional framework. As such, one common theme can be

identified between adult and children/families social work, practitioners crave for 'the fixer' and micro-approaches to working with service users, carers or families.

Whilst the overall narrative surrounding adult social work was considered a profession deemed to be based on 'tick boxes' (A\*, S3, K, H, J2, OP\*) which felt 'like a revolving door' (KL and S3) (Objective 1), lay theorising and ready-made typifications of services users was not so distant from viewing the service user as an entity that needed to be 'fixed'. The verb and pronoun choices signified objectification and impersonalised discourses towards the service user consistent with institutional discourses of the caring enterprise, the 'case study' in social casework as a prime example (Objective 4).

This shows how, whilst this study analyses of discourses in social work through a dialectical lens, many other similarities and consistencies are evident from wider literature even though it has utilised a specific but related methodology. Firstly, in the recounting of 'good and bad' social work, the narrative structure of these accounts was not dissimilar to the research studies of Pithouse and Atkinson (1988), Hall *et al.*, (1997) Taylor and White (2000), Riemann (2005) and Scourfield and Pithouse (2006). This showed how the casework story was presented in a particular way involving highly complex structures including narrative scenarios, multiple voices and a variety of narrator-actors (Hall *et al* 1997).

What this research has not explored however was the notion of 'professional survival kits' as defensive discourses (i.e. when things go wrong) based on the aims and objectives of this research (Bull and Shaw 1992). The limitations of this research are acknowledged, but in the case of suitability to practice investigations and relationship breakdowns in placements (in the University context), CDA provides a useful framework for the radical educationalist in constructions of good and bad social work where 'professional survival kits' may be deployed. Analysing and deconstructing how the narrative is presented in suitability procedures as one example illustrates the usefulness of discourse analytic tools as strategies for mediation. Any identification of contradictions and new ways of viewing the

situation (through recontextualisation) has much to offer critical social work in conflict management (Winslade and Monk 2000).

To conclude here, it is important to acknowledge how, out of twelve respondents, four social actors had chosen social work based on previous experiences of social work services such as being a service user themselves or having a child with an ascribed service user identity (disability or learning difficulties). This illuminated experiential and expressive values in the text. A further two related their choice to enter social work based on family members who had already qualified as a social worker (so this had influenced them), whilst the remainder related their motivations based on career choices drawn from previous experiences of working in Health and Social Care settings. Reflecting the economic pragmatist motivations of these respondents (Marcuse 1972; Carey, 2008), these were in contrast to the remaining one social actor whose motivations were based on having more power with the service user (implicitly referred to in the context of the 'helping' relationship) - (H) (Objective 3).

This research does have its limitations as it did not analyse the biographical structure of respondent's narratives in detail although a biographical question was included at the beginning of each interview. This would have provided this research with even more depth to the existential components of choosing social work as a career, but what can be gained from this study is that there were three key themes identified as motivators for entering social work. These included: family members already in the profession, personal and direct experience of social work services/interventions and career based choices.

Equally, this thesis could have explored the concept of power in more detail, but has explored how language and power manifest themselves in institutional settings and how these have the capacity to create, reconstitute and impose specific sets of discourses.

## **6.2 A Method for Social Work Education, Critical Social Work Practice and Research**

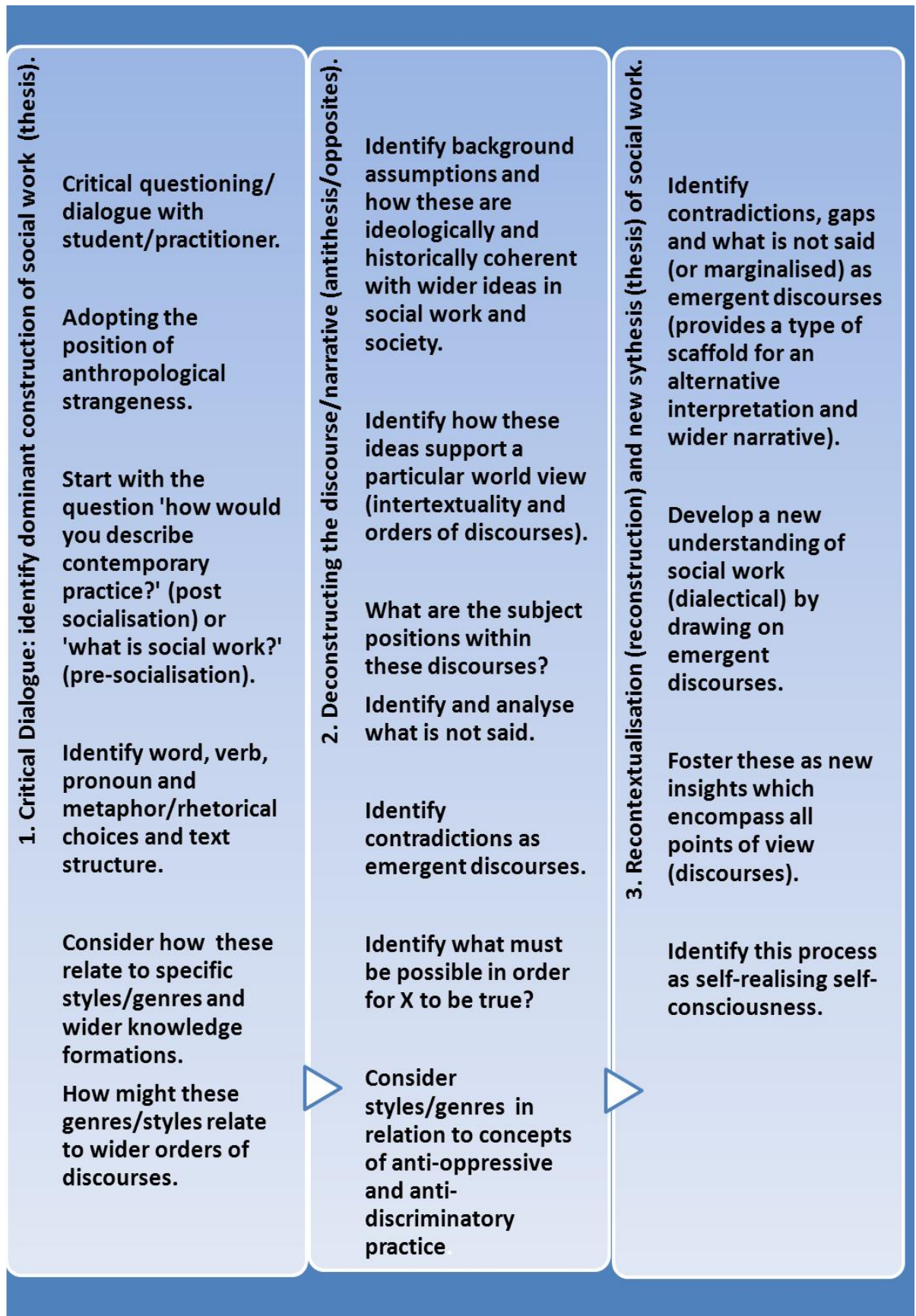
The concluding part of this thesis summarises and explains the narrative and discourse-analytic method that I have employed in this research (firstly identified in this thesis as Figure 1, p.77). It reflects my approach with learners in social work education in Wales during the interface between practice socialisation and social work knowledge. Based on critical deconstruction, this method is based on the traditions and application of critical theories and is further illuminated on page 262 of this thesis.

In having conversations with learners, this methodology fosters critical thinking and praxis in social work education and is argued to provide rich opportunities for the recontextualisation of ground floor narratives of social works identity in collaboration with others. This is because culture is viewed here as a means for ordering the social world through knowledge, language, religion or art and thus has a cognitive function but are sustained primarily in powerful social and material environments (Bourdieu, 1993).

Located in the organisational context (cultures) within social work education and practice, the dialectical principles and theories in this research are argued to provide social actors with opportunities to 'step outside' of thinking as usual, explore the taken for granted and to render the normal as strange. As Hick and Murray (2009) argue, dialectical approaches to social work emphasise how "social and political change begins with social relations of people's everyday lives" (in Grey and Webb, 2009, p .89). Change is argued to result from the unity and synthesis of opposites such as the good or bad social worker, true or false or idealism versus materialism (Hick and Murray 2009). These opposing forces and tensions /contradictions become the platform for change in dialectical social work (Mullaly, 1997).



**6.3 Figure 4: Method for Discourse Analytic Social Work: ‘Narratives, Identity and Praxis: exploring the personal and political self’.**



The process of deconstruction (in order to foster emergent and localised interpretations of social work) is compartmentalised into three key stages to emphasise how deconstruction is viewed as a continual process in reaching a new thesis. This method/model can be used in both education and social work practice in the context of providing social work practitioners with a 'discursive space' to reflect upon contemporary practice and the social work identity by using narrative and discourse analytic techniques. These stages involve:

#### **6.4 The telling of the story (identify construction of contemporary social work)**

As words and discourses have descriptive functions in social work, analysing these within the seven dimensions of textual analysis provides critical social work with a way in which to explore what is said as well as what is not said. This is because critical discourse analytic traditions expose how these discourses reflect taken for granted assumptions of society which dominate the human experience. In order to foster dialectical thought processes in social work education as well as practice, the facilitator employs critical questioning techniques which are considered intrinsic to discourse analysis and key to social change (Freire 1985; Jessup and Rogerson, 1999; Giroux 2001).

For Freire (1985) liberation from oppressive social structures involves critically questioning the ideas inherent within multi-layered societies (history and ideology). Pulling apart the taken for granted enables the practitioner to analyse their own language use and how this relates to wider cultural and structural discourses. Ways of interacting with learners in this way not only applies to understanding practice paradigms and historical and contemporary knowledge formations, but directly relates to the types of intervention the social worker will employ as 'agents of change' during their (inter-) actions with vulnerable individuals. According to Jessup and Rogerson (1999) the theories deployed when making sense of the lives of service users will be a product and outcome of specific ideas. These relate to particular contexts and will often exclude other knowledge formations over others. As such, the radical educator in critical social work requires:

a critical understanding of the language, modes of experience, and cultural forms of the students which whom they work [which] must be historically situated and politically analysed in connection with their wider economic and social determinants (Giroux, 1988, p.12).

For Freire (1985) critical consciousness is based on a dialectical process where changes in subjectivity can only occur when there are changes to their external (social) world. At the same time, changes in the social actor's external world can only be embraced following changes in their subjectivity.

In encounters between social workers, practitioners and learners, this method is built on a critical conversation and begins with the social actor sharing their narratives from the ground up (in the context of how they see the situation). Critical questioning techniques, reflexivity and deconstruction are the key components that make creativity possible in social work (Freire, 1985).

### **6.5 A critical deconstruction of the story (identifying contradictions)**

During socialisation processes with occupational cultures in social work, the social actor can access a 'critical space' through the adoption of the method of anthropological strangeness in social constructionist theory. In doing so, emergent and marginalised discourses can be fostered to enable the story to encompass wider and more marginalised voices. In overcoming dualistic and binary ways of constructing the profession, the authoring of one's own identity in social work is indeed possible or in other words, involves the process of becoming who one is (Nietzsche, 1968). This might go some way to acknowledging that different social contexts trigger an individual to think, feel and act on basis of a particular presentation of self (Turner *et al.*, 1987; Moreau and Leonard, 1989; Byrne, 2005;). As Burrell and Morgan (1979) point out,

...for whilst hegemony creates alienation, the individual worker is still his [sic] own theorist, his [sic] own source of class consciousness, and is therefore the most able to resist the forces of hegemony (p.289).

In the position of anthropological strangeness (in order for the social actor to develop self-realising self-consciousness), the recognition of how historical, cultural and ideological forces influence practice, thoughts and beliefs is imperative in critical social work. This is because deconstructing social work paradigms as well as ready-made discourses stemming from various discursive and social practices provides opportunities for strategies for action in challenging hegemonic discourses. The critically reflexive practitioner is aware of the assumptions that underlie how these influence social work practice and deconstructs the wider discourses available (Sheppard 1998; Taylor and White 2001). This involves the social worker discovering, recognising and understanding the underlying, unspoken and implicit assumptions that form the basis of their thoughts and beliefs. Described as a critical approach to professional practice that questions how knowledge is generated (Pease and Fook, 1999; Taylor and White 2000; Fook, 2012), this method (Narratives, Identity and Praxis, p.263) provides opportunities for practitioners to analyse their own styles and genres opening up the possibilities for various conversations of social work as a skilled profession.

This deconstruction process examines the assumptions which include theoretical and political contexts that are embedded in the social actor's narrative. The next part of the process is where the social worker and facilitator work together to recontextualise the variety of discourses available in order to include all points of view (Roscoe *et al.* 2011).

### **6.6) Recontextualising the context (identification of emergent discourses)**

In drawing on Bernstein's (1990) concept of recontextualisation, the facilitator focuses on the identified signs (words) and their associated meanings/constructions. In surfacing the contradictions inherent in these signs, these act as a resource (or scaffold) for emergent discourses. In essence, the facilitator takes the discourse from its original context in order to introduce it to another context (but through a dialectical lens). Recontextualisation then implies a change of meaning in communicative processes which is particularly important for the study of organisational discourses in social work cultures. In identifying the

problem - saturated narrative of state social work, a type of alternative scaffold can be identified which can co-exist alongside other orders of discourses. These can emerge as new discourses which can in turn change subjectivity and discursive practices. This goes some way to acknowledging that the representations of social actors in employing these discourses in social work speech may, in the end, be partly responsible for producing and sustaining its paralysing effects (Fairclough, 1989; Sarangi and Slembrouck, 1996).

In productively encouraging new articulations of social work, the rethinking and drawing on more locally based discourses of social work in Wales can take place. In essence, this method encourages social actors to develop their own capacity to author social works identity supporting the reconstruction of social selves in the face of hegemonic discourses of resistance and reconstitution. This links to a third recommendation for further research in Wales, the opportunity for ethnographic research in adult services as discourse analytic studies to date have mainly explored children and families social work contexts.

Narrative and discourse-analytic social work (particularly in the context of when learners come back to the University post-practice placement) is based on emancipatory principles for social work education that place the social actor (students) and facilitator (lecture) in a position of equal respect. This method can be broadly aligned with experience-centred narratives in research methodology (Squire 2005, 2007). This method/model ('Narratives, Identity and Praxis: exploring the personal and political self', p.263) outlines the original contribution to knowledge in this thesis. It has done so by devising an innovative narrative method for understanding the personal and political self in social work. This method can be generalised and applied to other professions when exploring professional discourses such as teaching, nursing and management. For example, in teaching discourses such as 'the weak student', or management discourses like the 'trouble maker'. This method provides has potential to provide opportunities for institutionalised ways of talking and their material affects to be analysed further.

Defined briefly in chapter five, experience-centred narratives understand storytelling as an essential means of human sense making and when the story is told, it becomes part of the social actor's consciousness (Squire 2005, 2007). Defined as a more socially and culturally-directed research framework, this research aligns the dialectical-historical analysis method broadly with Squire's (2008, 2013) experience-centred narrative research in social work education. This is because these approaches focus on the power of narratives and extend the notion of the story into the wider communicative realms of discourses. This research supports how experience-centred narratives can be combined alongside CDA methods as a way in which to analyse the textual features of accounts. Reflecting CDA and support for a transdisciplinary language in social work, this illustrates how 'two disciplines or frameworks can lead to a development of both through a process of each internally appropriating the logic of the other as a resource for its own development' (Chiapello and Fairclough 2002, p 186). Whilst relating stories to personal and social identities, consciousness and social/cultural representations can be argued by some to be theoretically and methodologically distinct areas (Squire in Andrews *et al.*, 2013), yet they share one main common them, the emphasis on the politics of representation, identity and expression (Freeman, 2003).

This study has explored the practicalities of dialectical theories combined with Fairclough's (1992) CDA (5). It concludes that these approaches have much to offer in the way of praxis in critical social work education. This is because this research is committed to exploring the relationship between language, education and social change (Giroux 2001; Freire 1985).

This research mirrors my own existential experiences of social work and my motivation which is underpinned by a determination to undertake a problem-orientated analysis in social work research. I have critically analysed (through deconstruction) the effects of these discourses upon the subject in the way of exploring the interpellation of ideology. It has embraced the traditions of social semiotics by drawing on a theoretical framework (a synthesis of key theories). As such, this research was committed to 'conceptual pragmatism' (Mouzelis, 1995, p.9) which means that it was related to questions of theory formation and

conceptualisation which was closely aligned to the problem investigated. This research has rejected the notion of a grand theory approach. Instead, it has applied conceptually relevant tools for the research problem and context studied (Weiss and Wodak, 2003). As van Dijk (1998) points out, CDA as a field and direction in research does not have a unitary theoretical framework. This has demonstrated how this thesis has made an original contribution to knowledge in the application and the potential of transdisciplinary methodologies in and for critical social work (1).

**6.7 Table Five: Theoretical Framework (Summary) of Analysis in this CDA study**

<b>Ontology: Dialectical philosophy.</b>	<b>Epistemology &amp; Key Assumptions: Social Constructionism/ Constructivism.</b>	<b>Paradigm: Critical Social Theory.</b>	<b>Methods and Principles adopted during fieldwork: Ethnography and anthropological strangeness.</b>	<b>Methods of data analysis: Critical Discourse Analysis.</b>
<p>Transcendental/Critical Realism (X and Y).</p> <p>Cause/effect, True/False.</p> <p>Structure/agency.</p> <p>Contradictions, reality never complete.</p> <p>Tri-partite model for understanding society (Bhaskar).</p> <p>1. Empirical (cognition and interpretation).</p> <p>2. Actual (cause/effect).</p> <p>3. Real (social structures).</p> <p>THE WHOLE CONTEXT: Thesis/antithesis/ Synthesis (Hegel).</p> <p>Meta-physical analysis.</p>	<p>Reality external to consciousness whilst asserting that all meaning made of that reality is context dependent and socially constructed.</p> <p>Objectivism viewed as socially formed patterns that impinge upon people's daily lives – seen as unquestioned boundaries- viewed as historically formed and represent human struggles.</p> <p>Lived experiences can be distorted by false consciousness and ideology and so these theories are concerned with the reduction of allusions within human experiences.</p> <p>Reality consists of two opposing forces- constant process of reconciliation.</p>	<p>Marx and Hegel – history and materialism.</p> <p>Althusser - ideology &amp; False Consciousness</p> <p>Hegel, consciousness &amp; objective idealism.</p> <p>Derrida – deconstruction of text (post-structuralism).</p> <p>Foucault – Discursive (socio-cultural and historical practices).</p> <p>Mead, Burr (symbolic interactionism/ Social constructionism).</p> <p>Critical &amp; subjective idealism/Kant).</p> <p>Kant &amp; consciousness (critical idealism).</p>	<p>Critical ethnography- context dependent and related to social structures.</p> <p>Methods of fieldwork: anthropological strangeness – to see how social structures are accommodated and interpreted/resisted in micro-politics/ discursive (cultural) practices.</p> <p>Freire- dialectical principles in critical pedagogy (critical dialogue).</p> <p>Geertz – interpretation of cultures (thick description, trustworthiness).</p> <p>Study driven by practical and problem orientated research goals (Marx, Nietzsche, and Habermas).</p> <p>Radical humanism in sociology.</p>	<p>Fairclough – Critical Discourse Analysis Method.</p> <p>Critical Linguistics (Halliday, Fowler, Kress and Hodge).</p> <p>1. Textual</p> <p>2. Discursive Practices</p> <p>3. Social Practices (ideological/historical/intertextual).</p> <p>Understanding of society: whole context with various elements (dialectical).</p> <p>Bhaskar, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Mead, Foucault, Gramsci, Althusser (theoretical triangulation).</p> <p>Abductive process (Wodak, 1996).</p>



I align my principles and ethics in critical social work education (and research) with radical humanist theories in sociology which have origins in Kant (1787) and Hegel's (1807) work. Hegel's (1807) notion was that any reality rests upon the 'spirit'. In essence, consciousness was viewed here as 'spirit' and was based on the assumption that individual consciousness is always subject to external patterns of universal reason. Hegelianism also influenced Gramsci (1971) who stood opposed to orthodox Marxism in arguing that a truly dialectical theory that transcends all previous philosophical dichotomies is based on the philosophy of praxis. Gramsci (1971) considered this philosophy as 'sufficient unto itself' (p.406). Thus this research was orientated to action and change which identifies that,

When people join together to exert control over their daily lives, they experience the changes they make as their own. Instead of reinforcing the sense of powerlessness that often accompanies modest improvements granted from the top of a hierarchal structure, a strategy of direct action enables people to create their own power (Ackelsberg, in Shanley and Narayan, 1997, p. 166).

Critical social work requires a language to foster self-realising self-consciousness and strategies for action in the face of dominant orders of discourses. Consciousness here in this research moves beyond a single definition based on abstraction or spirit, consciousness becomes more of a force for a political end in critical social work. Based on a premise of practical engagement with the politics surrounding social works identity, this research advocates the unification of theories and practice in social work education. This is because this research concludes that any understanding of society must embrace theories which acknowledge its entirety or totality, identifying the object and subjective worlds which surround it in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of its multi-layered elements (Wodak and Meyer 2009). In essence, this provides researchers with a way in which to analyse the meta-physical (whole context) of social work.

This research illuminated how there are many interpretations that can co-exist in the constructions of contemporary adult social work. Ironically this is often overlooked in the dominance of discourses of resistance available in social work cultures and

literature. By engaging in a critical conversation which explores power, ideology, history, language and culture, the social actor is encouraged to author their own identity of social work.

This research concludes with three recommendations for further research in social work education and practice in the exploration of professional identity and socialisation in the context of discourse analytic studies. These are:

- 1) To explore the extent to which ideology has interpellated the subject's (pre-socialisation) construction of social work (personal and political self) prior to education and analyse (longitudinal design and larger sample) and how the original construction changes throughout their academic journey (post-socialisation);
- 2) To combine the use of experience-centred narratives and biographical component to explore social actors motivation for entering social work;
- 3) Undertake ethnomethodological research in adult state social work in Wales utilising experience-centred narratives and CDA to explore storytelling processes in occupational cultures and,
- 4) To explore the methodology 'Narratives, Identity and Praxis: exploring the personal and political self' proposed in this thesis further with social work practitioners by providing a 'discursive space' in examining contemporary social work in adults in Wales (critical social work and self-awareness). This can be explored through the use of focus groups as well as utilising the method in social work education during social processes of identification.

The development of critical discourse and narrative methods in social work education can prepare students for practice contexts as well as being integrated into modules such as organisational theory, social work theory and social work methods. By analysing organisational cultures in cause and effect ways, this provides individuals with tools for 'survival in the workplace' in the face of cynicism and subject positions of powerlessness. As the Quality Assurance Agency (2008) bench mark statements for social work education in England, Wales and Scotland point out, 'social workers need to recognise and work with the powerful links

between intrapersonal interpersonal factors and the wider social, legal, economic, political and cultural context of people's lives' (QAA, 2008). This includes the social worker learning how to constructively challenge individual, institutional and structural discrimination.

As I watched and observed the cultures of local authorities all those years ago and wondered why I could find positions 'in-between' prevailing discourses based on dualistic constructions, I later realised that dialectical theories had emancipatory properties which provided me with access to a rich tapestry of ideas and new ways of seeing the social work world. In essence, this led to the refining of my ideas into a theoretical framework over a number of years in the endeavour to be of service to others when they experience apathy, powerless and an identity crisis in social work. In my view, this type of language is well overdue in social work literature to date.

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## **Appendixes**

## **Appendix A: Opt in form for both student and practitioner**

### **'Opting in' form**

Dear Researcher,

I agree to participate and be interviewed for the study titled: Social work discourses: An exploratory study.

I understand that by sending this form back to the researcher within 2 weeks of receiving the initial information, I will be contacted in due course (within one month afterwards) for the interview process.

On attending the interview, I understand that the researcher will provide me with a consent form to sign but in the meantime, the following agreement and information provided outlines that I am willing to participate in this study.

Name:

Work telephone number or mobile:

E mail address

Most appropriate time to be contacted:

Date sent to researcher:



## **Appendix B: Information sheet for social work practitioners**

**Title:** Social work discourses: an exploratory study (January 2011)

### **Information Sheet for Social Workers in the Adult Sector**

This research is primarily concerned with how we make sense of social work and is part of the researcher's PhD studies. The research aims to explore how, through education and practice experiences, our understanding of social work may change and develop over time.

#### **What is the research about?**

- To explore and identify the ways in which social work students make sense (talk) of/about social work;
- To identify the ways in which social work students make sense of social work following placement experiences in the adult sector (care management);
- To explore how qualified social workers in the adult sector make sense of contemporary social work;
- To explore the relationship between what students and qualified social workers say about social work practice.

#### **Topics for discussion will broadly be around:**

- Reasons for coming into social work.
- Social work role and previous expectations prior to training.
- Perceptions of social work task today.
- Challenges of social work today.

#### **Why and how was I chosen?**

You have been given this letter and information sheet because the researcher would like to invite you to participate in this research. You are a social worker practising in the adult sector working within the umbrella of community care.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

No. It is your choice whether you take part. If you do wish to take part, the researcher will meet with you for about an hour and talk about social work. You can withdraw from the research at any time at all, before, during and after the meeting/interview. It is important to note that no names of local authorities will be used in the study.

**What will happen next if I want to take part?**

If you don't want to take part, you don't have to respond to the information sheet and you will hear no more about it.

The researcher would want to talk with you for around 45-60 minutes. With your permission the researcher would like to record the conversation in order to collect accurate data. No-one else apart from the researcher will hear the recording.

**What might be the disadvantages of taking part?**

The only disadvantage is that you will be giving up some of your time. You may, however, find the study interesting and worthwhile. There is no intention to explore any personal issues, only issues related to social work practice.

**Will my taking part be kept confidential?**

No one apart from the researcher (person talking to you) will know who you are and that you have taken part in the study unless you choose to tell someone yourself.

**What will happen to the results?**

The researcher may publish their research in journals and talk about it at conferences. At no point however will your name be associated with the study and you will not be identified personally in any of the reports on the analysis/findings.

**What do I do if I want to make a complaint?**

If anything about this research concerns you either before, during or after your involvement, please contact my supervisor Professor Alexander M. Carson on 01978 290666. He will then advise you of the next course of action subject to the nature of the concern expressed.

**What are your contact details?**

Karen Roscoe, Glyndwr University. 01978293181. [k.roscoe@glyndwr.ac.uk](mailto:k.roscoe@glyndwr.ac.uk)

## **Appendix C: Information sheet for students**

**Title:** Social work discourses: An exploratory study (January 2011)

### **Information Sheet for student social workers**

This research is primarily concerned with how we make sense of social work and is part of the researcher's PhD studies. The research aims to explore how, through education and practice experiences, our understanding of social work may change and develop over time.

#### **What is the research about?**

- To explore and identify the ways in which social work students make sense (talk) of/about social work;
- To identify the ways in which social work students make sense of social work following placement experiences in the adult sector (Unified Assessment).

#### **Topics for discussion will broadly be around:**

- Reasons for coming into social work.
- Social work role and previous expectations prior to training.
- Perceptions of social work task today.
- Challenges of social work today.

#### **Why and how was I chosen?**

You have been given this letter and information sheet because the researcher would like to invite you to participate in this research. You are a student social worker (who has had an adult social work placement, years two and three of the degree) or a year one student who has just started the course.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

No. It is your choice whether you take part. If you do wish to take part, the researcher will meet with you for about an hour and talk about social work. You can withdraw from the research at any time at all, before, during and after the meeting/interview. You can also contact the researcher for additional information should you wish prior to the interview. It is also important to note that the interview does not have any relationship to your studies on the BA (Hons) in Social Work if you wish to participate.

In relation to adult practitioners, no names of local authorities will be used in the study.

**What will happen next if you want to take part**

If you do not wish to take part, you do not have to respond to the information sheet. The researcher will meet with you to discuss social work for approximately one hour. With your permission, the researcher would like to record the conversation in order to collect accurate data. No-one else apart from the researcher will hear the recording.

**What might be the disadvantages of taking part?**

The only disadvantage is that you will be giving up some of your time. You may however find the study interesting and worthwhile. There is no intention to explore any personal issues, only issues related to social work practice.

**Will my taking part be kept confidential?**

No one apart from the researcher (person talking to you) will know who you are and that you have taken part in the study unless you choose to tell someone yourself.

**What will happen to the results?**

The researcher may publish their research in journals and talk about it at conferences. At no point however will your name be associated with the study and you will not be identified personally in any of the reports on the analysis/ findings.

**What do I do if I want to make a complaint?**

If anything about this research concerns you either before, during or after your involvement, please contact my supervisor Professor Alexander M. Carson on 01978 290666. He will then advise you of the next course of action subject to the nature of the concern expressed.

**What are your contact details?**

Karen Roscoe, Glyndwr University. 01978293181. [k.roscoe@glyndwr.ac.uk](mailto:k.roscoe@glyndwr.ac.uk)

## Appendix D: Summary profile of sample

Status in Study/Qualification	Initial of Student/ Practitioner and Gender	Age, Ethnicity, Nationality (where the person was born)	Motivation for entering social work training
Year 1 (student)	P - Female	32, Welsh (non-Welsh speaking)	Family member
Year 1	J - Female	43, Polish (second language English), White	Career
Year 1	S* - Male	35, Welsh (non-Welsh speaking), White.	Family member
Year 2	K - Female	29, Welsh (non-Welsh speaking), White.	Previous experience of being a service user (looked after child)
Year 2	KL - Female	22, Welsh (non-Welsh speaking), White	Career
Year 2	J2 - Female	50, Welsh (non-Welsh speaking), White.	Own child had learning difficulties
Year 2	R* - Male	43, Welsh and Fluent Welsh speaking (interview conducted in English), White	Own child had learning difficulties.
Year 2	H - Female	40, English, White.	To have more power to help
Year 3	S3 - Female	41, Welsh (non-Welsh speaking), White	Career
Year 3	A* - Male	32, Welsh (non-Welsh speaking), White	Career
Qualified Social Worker (18 months)	QS - Female	40, Welsh (non-Welsh speaking), White	Partner had accident which led to social work input
Qualified Social Work (over 10 years qualified) <i>unemployed at time of interview</i>	QP - Male	61, English, White	Status as a carer, stated reason as influence to join profession

## Appendix E: Transitional narratives (pilot study exercise)

1.



2.

### What is a narrative of experience?

- Assumes that experience centred narratives are sequential and meaningful;
- That they 're-present' experience;
- They are defined by themes rather than structure (Labov) and,
- Identify generalisations, particular events or imaginary events.

3.

### So what does this have to do with us?

- My intentions today are to use experience-centred approaches to analyse and explore your narratives about current placement experiences.
- To identify the key themes, differences and similarities.
- For it to be student led, facilitative and dialogic.
- Fundamentally, so that you can learn from each other!

4.

### Starting point

- Take a few minutes and think...what is my dominant narrative about my current placement?
- What does this say about me?
- What might this suggest about my interpretation of the placement I am in?

5.

### Theme 1

- Manipulating the system
- Care management vs. social work
- Playing a role
- Tick boxes
- These narratives are viewed in this context as wider narratives from the organisational culture in which they operate.
- Process vs. service led
- Dichotomous thinking

6.

### Theme 2

- Power
  - Both positive and negative experiences of multi agency working.
  - Defensive practice
  - Developing networks
  - Professional credibility

7.

### Theme 3

- Paradigm Shift (change in outlook of social work practice)
  - Transitional narratives capturing hope
  - Capturing student's capacity to challenge and to choose what to challenge
  - Successful in challenging and adhering to social work values
  - Bravery!
  - Found vocation.

8.

### Theme 4

- Synthesis
  - Ability to be eclectic with the knowledge base
  - Showing ability to think critically about the constraints within the system within which they operate (creativity in care management)
  - Deconstructed and reconstructed
  - Majority are feeling equipped and ready for practice.

## Appendix E continued: Transitional narratives (pilot study exercise)

9.

### Narratives as human sense making?

- Narratives are what make us human....
- 'examination' of a life, without which life is not worth living, consists in the recounting of it (Ricoeur, 1984, p52).
- How are you representing or reconstructing your narrative about your placement experience?

10.

### Experience-centred narratives

- Co-construction of narratives (influenced by wider members)
- Consider whether the narratives you have drawn on today involve wider meta –narratives (social work themes/debates and criticisms)...
- Consider how your narratives reflect organisational culture (lay theorising, rhetorical strategies, mental models)
- Consider how these encapsulate unconscious meanings, politics of representation and cultural patterns and how this in turn, will effect and impact upon your experience centred narrative.

11.

### References..

- Andrews, M., Squire, C. and Tamboukou, M. (2008) Doing Narrative Research, London, Sage.

## **Appendix F: Consent form for pilot study (classroom activity)**

### **'Opting in' form**

Dear Researcher,

I agree to participate in the classroom based pilot study titled 'Transitional Narratives' which I understand is part of the fieldwork of a PhD thesis.

I understand that by sending this form back to the researcher within 2 weeks of receiving the initial information, I will also be consulted at the beginning of the exercise on the day to be given the option to opt out should this be deemed necessary.

I understand that the researcher will provide me with a consent form to sign but that in the meantime, the following agreement and information provided outlines that I am willing to participate in this study. I also understand that the classroom based activity will be recorded for the purposes of the research.

Name of participant:

E mail address

Date sent to researcher:

Activity to take part in November 2010.



## **Appendix G: Sample of one interview**

S1: Okay KL. Thank you for agreeing to come to the interview. Can you tell me how old you are?

S2: I am 22.

S1: Okay. Can you tell me, what was the main reason for you choosing social work as a career?

S2: I think it started when I started my job when I was 16 as a volunteer for Barnardos and then from there, I went to college and did health and social care. I supposed I was looking in - I looked into nursing and then I thought I did not really want to go into that.

S1: Okay.

S2: I had a look around social work, and looked into what the job involved and I thought that'd be really interesting.

S1: Okay. So at that point when you made that decision for social work, what did you think social workers did?

S2: To be honest with you, I had a bit of a shock. I know it's mostly paperwork anyway but I did not realise it was as much time spent in the office really. I did not think it was but then I've had – both my placements have been – one's been local authority and then the other one's been voluntary, so I've experienced both.

S1: So, you are talking about how you think now about social work and around the paperwork, but go back to the very early days, what was the kind of ideas or thoughts of social work did you have?

S2: I just thought supporting people to live more independently within the community.

S1: Okay.

S2: And assisting them with, you know, certain things, you know, like daily tasks.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Finding them help and aid, in order to make them live more independently.

S1: That is fine.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Okay. So, that was your understanding before you came?

S2: Yeah.

S1: And you say now you didn't realise there was much paperwork - that was that much paperwork. So what team have you just had a placement in?

S2: Older people's team.

S1: And that is a local authority team, and that is, they operate the Care Management Model.

S2: Yeah.

S1: And the Unified Assessment.

S2: Okay. So tell me what it was like for you then going into that environment? What did it feel like as a social worker?

S2: I found it overwhelming. All the policies and legislation that guide it, and also I felt it was unrealistic how I was expected to go out and do a unified assessment on an individual that I'd just met the once when I first went out to visit them, there was this thing where, you know, you take this form, you take that form, you know, even finance as well and I thought - we had financial offices within our building...

S1: Yeah.

S2: But then I was expected to also go into that, you know, what they're earning, have they got over 22, you know. I felt quite pressured for that as well. I thought that was unrealistic for me to go out in order to gain all that information in one meeting.

S1: And so was that the expectation that you would carry out a whole unified assessment in a meeting?

S2: In one meeting, yeah.

S1: And was that generally the culture?

S2: I think that was actually the culture, yeah. Because it was the quicker it was, the quicker we can input care, the care agencies. It was quite pressured as well because I felt I had a lot of - when I first started, I think I had three or four on my case load and towards the end, I had 12.

S1: And that's quite big...

S2: It is I think, you know, they would not have put it on me if they did not think I would be able to manage it well. I am grateful for that experience but at the same time, I just feel that getting that unified assessment done, meeting the person

once, you cannot verify it. It was just so - I knew that I was going to input care and I knew that something could fail.

S1: Yeah.

S2: It was like a revolving door.

S1: Yeah.

S2: I am not just stigmatising older people but it is, you know, if it is not going to work, one does not fit all does it?

S1: No.

S2: And with that, did that tend to be the kind of, you know, it was 'let's go out, do a very quick surface assessment, purchase the care, get the case sorted. Was it that kind of quick pace?

S2: I found it was a very fast paced work but then I was finding myself going back to the office and I know I shouldn't have but I did because I felt like I needed to get it done in order to have a day free.

S1: Yeah.

S2: It was not really free but I'd stay in the office until about six o'clock, half past six at night, typing up an assessment because it was so -- and when I first started, I did not have any training

S1: All right.

S2: So I did not have any training and I was the first one to do -- out of the whole team, the first one to do a care plan on the new system and then my practice teacher printed it off because she did not have a clue how to do it and I was showing all the social workers how to do it.

S1: Alright.

S2: And I was just like so - only because I figured out and sat there. It took me a good two hours to get all the information in.

S1: So what did that feel like to you?

S2: I felt pressured and stressed.

S1: Okay. And then what about the kind of actual social work, what were you thinking about social work while you were doing all this?

S2: To be honest with you, I just thought "Is this what it's all about? Sitting here, just typing it all up?" I know you have got to cover your back and you've got to say, you

know, why you've put the work in and what you are doing. It was quite stressful but I was just getting on. I just felt like I just had to get on with it and this is going to sound awful but the more I was trying to put into things, I think, the more pressured I was.

S1: Yeah.

S2: But when I went with the flow and with everything they were doing and showing me, it was a lot more easier to -- if the saying is 'put up and shut up', basically.

S1: Okay.

S2: Get on with it, but...

S1: And did you feel that that was the culture? You know because perhaps if you just said, "I need to spend four days with this older woman to get a decent assessment". Do you think you could have said that or did you think that...?

S2: Well, yeah, because I did go back to - there was a few service users on my case load that I felt that... I said to my practice teacher, "I feel that I have not looked into it too much, I feel like if I am going to put this care in now, it is just going to fail" and she said, "Well, that is your judgement, you know, maybe go back and see her" because I had a few that were being discharged from hospital as well and I was getting the ward nurse phoning me up saying that I was not doing my job properly and this woman needs to be out of the hospital, and because I was dealing with people within hospital as well and getting them back home and changing their care. So, you know, it took its time contacting the care agency.

S1: Yeah.

S2: But then the nurses – it was like a blame culture there, they were blaming me.

S1: Right, just so that they can get a free bed.

S2: Yeah. It was numbers and then...

S1: Yeah.

S2: I felt as well, sometimes when I was doing reviews that was target driven as well within the team, you know, "come on we need to get these reviews done". I had a case load as well and then they were putting reviews on my desk as well to do but then it was like "oh, it's just a simple review, go out and do it." It was not, it turned into something big where they had missed things out and...

S1: Right. That is interesting.

S2: Yeah. But I found as well, and I'm not slating them – I think they did do a really good job but I was looking over unified assessments that had been done by the CCOs and by the social workers and you could tell the difference in what they were

doing and I come across one of my clients. I was reading over because she had – I think it was about four unified assessments on her case load - I was reading over it and it was about, oh god it was about seven years overall, and I was reading it and then when I phoned up to go and visit her and I went to visit her, she wasn't PEG fed anymore. She had a stroke, she was no longer PEG fed. She has not been PEG fed for five years but on every single review, it just copied and pasted over what from when she had the stroke, so, I think, because a social worker had not gone out to do that review, it was the CCO.

[Crosstalks]

S1: A Community Care Officer

S2: I think obviously to make their job quicker, copy paste, copy paste, and a lot of the unified assessments that I was reading over were just copied and pasted, nothing new put in. So I pulled my practice teacher up and told her about it and she said that is really good that you picked up on that. She said you come - sometimes you come across some poorly written unified assessments but I found because I was very thingy to detail. It took me longer to write them but then again, I knew I was getting all the information.

S1: Yeah.

S2: You know I was not missing anything out but when I found that, I was quite disgusted about that.

S1: Yeah. That is quite concerning isn't it?

S2: The care agency had had that care plan. They still say she is being PEG fed but she had not for five years. So I don't know how they were going about that. It just shows you doesn't it? And this lady, her daughters, both daughters worked for that care agency as well that had got the care plan and even they did not pick up on that. So, which just shows you how fast paced it was, for that to be missed.

S1: So, in the team that you were in, how did they talk about their roles in social work? Were they happy, were they...

S2: They were very positive team actually and my practice teacher was brilliant, she was showing me all her theories because she was fairly newly qualified.

S1: Yeah.

S2: You know she is quick like interested in theory, and "K, why have you done this? Why?" I think, she was basically just picking away at it and I think that was what helped me with the methods assignment, because the more we were going into it... We had supervision every - we did not miss any supervisions, it was very, you know...

S1: So you have had a good experience.

S2: I did.

S1: Do you think there are difficulties then in relation to social work? What are they then?

S2: I think time is, like I found that the time scale and stuff, like they say "Oh, you can get this done in so many..." but realistically, you can't.

S1: Yeah.

S2: It is like you have got so many on your case load and I was just saying that I did manage it well because I think that was what made me more organised and planned. I was planning ahead a lot and I had a lot more time then to go and see my clients but I feel that you do not get much time with the individual who you are writing this care plan about.

S1: Yeah.

S2: And when I was going up for them to sign it, I would get them to read over it because I did not want anything being missed. Whereas I think quite a few care quality unified assessments that I came across, some of them had not even been signed.

S1: Ok.

S2: No, it wasn't. It was meeting the criteria and it was very much – it was all about money really as well. You know, you can't offer them this or I'd send someone to a day centre and they said "They do not meet the criteria even though they are socially isolated and had no family locally that is not good enough." But I just felt like "What is going on?" I thought it is supposed to be person-centred and I think I was basing all my approach on that and the more I was doing that, the more I was fighting against it.

S1: Right.

S2: You know, to go, "Right, we need to do this." But it was like I was doing this and then she'd be like "Oh have you finished that unified – " "No I'm still working on it," but I know that I am still learning and she says you know, you learn from your mistakes and at one point as well when – because I was putting a lot of my clients to panels as well so I had that experience wherein yeah I just felt like it was all about you know, meeting the criteria and 'Oh I'm sorry we haven't got the funding for that, you can't have this, can't have that.' There was a lot of referring them onto reablement as well.

S1: So, how did the culture respond to the – "Oh there is no money for that and there is no money for that?" Do they advocate for those clients or do they just accept it and just...

S2: Yeah, they do. My practice teacher was very good. You know, she said with a lot of hers, you know, "I'm not happy with this" and she wanted me to go out and see certain cases that she felt that – and I've even read her panel applications where she backed everything up but then the panel - it still come back and had not been passed.

S1: Right.

S2: And I said to her you know, "It's all there, the information is there" but on most of these applications, there were no social workers on the panel.

S1: Really?

S2: Yeah. And I thought that was really bad because it is getting the diversity...

S1: Who was on the panel then?

S2: Nurses, there was a few as well that were community based. Occupational therapist and someone that deals with - is it the money? You know, all the...

S1: Budgets?

S2: Yeah, the budgets.

S1: So, basically for panel applications, I mean, I think that is really interesting. The panel consisted of health professionals, occupational health.

S2: Yeah, and sometimes **not** a social worker.

S1: And sometimes not social workers and decisions on people's needs were being made on that basis?

S2: Yeah. So you can see where the conflict was coming in there because I had a few that were back and I was comparing my panel applications because I'd look over a few and think "Well, why I have not got that?" And then I'd read who the person was and then I'd go to my practice teacher and ask you know, "Is it something I've done?" Because I beat myself up about it sometimes and I got upset at one point because I had a client in hospital she was waiting to be discharged home and then because of the time it took and it was constantly coming back, she was placed in a community hospital line.

S1: Right.

S2: It was not good for her, she wanted to be at home.

S1: Yeah.

S2: And I just felt like I was fighting for her, you know, for her best interests, for what she wanted. I just felt like that was against me. The panel was against me but we

all want what is best for her and they were just saying, you know, why such a high care package and it just felt – Oh God it was awful at times because I was fighting her case, so - should be working with them.

S1: Yeah.

S2: But I had a good experience with the discharge liaison officer from the hospital and had a good relationship with the occupational therapist within the community and within the hospital and also the physio as well.

S1: So, the agency sounds like it worked well.

S2: Yeah. But some of the nurses on the wards were awful to me. I had one that I phoned up once about my client and she would not give me any information and then she said to me as well – this is bad, because I told my practice teacher, I got a bit upset about it actually, she said to me, your -- these are the exact words because I typed it up as well, because I put it in the case note. “You’re telling me this poor little old lady has got to sit in this hospital bed. She wants to go home because some social worker hasn’t done her job properly” and then I was explaining and she went, “Well you are a student social worker, you don’t know much do you?” Like that and that’s what she said to me and I felt awful.

S1: So, I suppose - where do you sit now with your perception of social work following that 80-day placement?

S2: If anything, it’s made me want to fight more.

S1: That sounds good.

S2: But it has made me more determined.

S1: Right.

S2: And I feel that towards the end, okay I did just get on with it because, you know, it was easier for me to just get on with my job but I was really - with the attention to details and stuff, I still stuck to my ways with that but I did notice it took me longer to get things done whereas..

[crosstalk]

S1: Well that is because you are student.

S2: Yeah.

S1: And that’s okay.

S2: Yeah.



- S1: And you are probably perhaps more conscientious than some of the unified assessments, reviews and things that you had seen and you did not think it was particularly good practice, did you?
- S2: No.
- S1: I suppose that made you more determined. What about when new cases came up for allocation? Did they have allocation meetings?
- S2: Yeah, they did. We had a meeting every other Friday it was with the manager but the manager, absolutely lovely, his door was always open. If I had a problem, my practice teacher took a week off to get all her part done in the portfolio and have a bit of time, and he was very supportive, he kept coming in and out of the office asking if I was okay.
- S1: So what were the allocation meetings like? You know, because you are talking about high pressured, high case loads? When a case comes up for discussion, how was it talked about?
- S2: Firstly, they were looking at whether it was suitable for me as well and my practice teacher she had a lot of - whatever got allocated to me, she had to look as well and felt if it was too much and also I felt as if when I did feel under pressure, I could go and tell her and say, "Look, I think I've took on bit more" and she would say, "Well, hand over this case to me, go and see the manager". I would go and see the manager and he was absolutely lovely and the senior practitioner as well, she was lovely.
- S1: So, with the team, when you're sat in an allocation meeting and somebody says, "Right, this is needed", were the team generally quite okay about picking up new cases? Were they generally positive about service users?
- S2: Yeah, they were. I think it was because they got the support as well off the manager and if they felt that something was not right they could approach him with anything and within the meeting, it was all open discussion and quite a lot of them did argue their corner and say, "Well, I feel that this has gone wrong".
- S1: Okay. So they were like you would disagree, discuss cases in depth?
- S2: Yeah. And at times, even the manager would say, "Well, this isn't working right, we need to put something into place or what do you feel as a team, will work better for you" because there was a lot of discussion as well because I think they had a lot of anxiety towards the end of my placement because I had seen all the team change because they were going into a generic team they had that on their mind. I think quite a lot towards the last two or three weeks that was mostly on their minds towards the end.
- S1: So, when you are in the case discussion meetings and when they say, "Well, no, I think this and I think that" what would they basing their thoughts on?

S2: Well, I think it was just their experiences with other individuals [crosstalks].

S1: Did they ever say “Research shows that it is this or evidence suggests that?”

S2: They said a lot of it was their - because they were always looking at their case load and saying, “It just shows because its blah blah, it’s happened with this, or, you know, from their past experiences.

S1: So they were basing their decisions on previous experiences of cases?

S2: Yeah.

S1: And their experience of being a practitioner?

S2: Yeah. And also as well working with other individuals within the community as well and the nurses and...

S1: But do you think they were always right?

S2: Not all the time but then again, they had - because it was all, it was an open discussion. They took on everyone’s point of view and there were a lot of people that have got a lot of experience within the team and you know certain individuals to go to if you need a bit of information [crosstalks]...

S1: Did you ever hear terms like the research shows or evidence suggests, or best practices in those kind of meetings or was it generally based on experience?

S2: Most of it was experience because it did not fit very much here, theory based or anything like that within the meeting as a team.

S1: Yeah.

S2: Although within supervisions, my practice teacher was very -- this is what we’ve got to do.

S1: Yeah.

S2: You know cover this, what do you feel, she was asking me how do I feel, what approach could we have used.

S1: I think that is interesting because that is what supervision should be but I am interested why perhaps that does not come out [Crosstalks] in the forum because for me, yes, experience is good but we know it is not always right. Were there any instances where you disagreed with some of those opinions that were being made or that there were disagreements between others?

S2: I think because they have got the extra care housing, and I thought that they had cut the extra care housing scheme and I thought that worked very well with you saying about that, the social worker who did – dealt with the extra care housing,

because they were all allocated certain roles. He was saying about all the evidence and comparing the extra care housing within XXXX and the new one has just been built now and when -- because he took me out with him to do a visit in the XXXX one and then I went to see the façade, I could compare.

S1: Yeah. You could actually see.

S2: There was a lot of stuff he was saying about the numbers of people and stuff like that but they had a few disagreements about the criteria, it was mostly that I found most of the - not arguments but most of their points were about the criteria, and saying that...

S1: Or whether somebody met them or not.

S2: Met them to go into extra care housing.

S1: And what were they basing whether they met them on? Basing it on experience or what?

S2: Without -- you know, it's the sheet isn't it, the Unified Assessment, what comes through and you know, they had to have certain needs to meet that extra care housing and support and whether they needed that care when they were in there but it was mostly like that but I just felt that it was too much criteria-based than the individual.

S1: Okay.

S2: It wasn't very much person-centred but that is -- I think that is the culture that they got involved in.

S1: Yeah.

S2: But they were a very supportive team because they were having anxieties of what team they were going to be based in and were they going to get split up because they worked so well together and they know who you were going to go to.

S1: Yeah. That is important as we know, yeah.

S2: Yeah. And a few of the girls got quite upset because they were saying, "Who are we going to go to now and what's the team going to be like?" They were quite negative about it actually, being generic.

S1: Yeah.

S2: So that is what it was like towards the end but...

S1: Okay. So I think were done.

S2: Yeah.

S1: Thank you KL, excellent.

S2: That is okay. Thank you very much.

S1: Thank you.

## Appendix H: Units of data analysis

TABLE 1

Word Choices: Vocabulary/Analysing Lexical Choices
<p><b>Semiotic choices:</b> understood as language is an available set of options and certain choices have been made to match the author's motivation.</p> <p><b>Overlexicalisation:</b> gives a sense of over persuasion and is normally problematic or of ideological contention.</p> <p><b>Lexical absence/suppression:</b> certain texts or ideas that we thought we would expect are absent.</p> <p><b>Structural oppositions:</b> networks of meanings, vocabulary that makes classes of concepts, binary oppositions.</p> <p><b>Lexical choices &amp; genres:</b> lexical choices can indicate levels of authority and co-membership (links to wider policy and signify specific discourses).</p>

TABLE 2

Grammar (use of verbs) showing ideational and relational meanings
<p><b>Mental processes:</b> processes of sensing (3 categories, verbs associated with cognition 'thinking' – hearing and perception).</p> <p><b>Behavioural processes:</b> like watch, stare denote psychological behaviour or physical behaviour, look at, listen to.</p> <p><b>Verbal processes:</b> 'to say' consists of three participants – sayer and receiver. Represents agency.</p> <p><b>Relational processes:</b> where things are stated to exist in relation to one another.</p> <p><b>Existential processes:</b> represent something that exists or happens, as in 'there has been'.</p> <p><b>Material Processes (transitivity):</b> where verbs describe the processes of doing – concrete actions that have a material consequence.</p>

## Appendix H continued: Units of data analysis

TABLE 3b

Cohesion (use of pronouns)
(Ideational and interpersonal meanings in relation to social and personal identities)
<b>Classification of social actors:</b> classifying and the ideological effects that these classifications can have.
<b>Personalisation and impersonalisation</b> – Individual versus collectivism – specification and genericism, nomination or functionalism.
<b>Pronoun versus noun:</b> the use of them and us division – we, us, them.
<b>Suppression:</b> what is missing from the text – what should be there but is invisible.
<b>Objectification:</b> social actors can be reduced to features, whether she is a female or not, is only represented by the features of being a woman or older person.

TABLE 4

Text Structure: Devised Units of Analysis (Narrative text structures)
<b>The Story</b> – is a fabula that is presented in a certain manner – the arrangement of events in a particular sequence – social agents of actual events are presented with ‘distinct traits’ which transform them into characters ‘focalising the story’ which shows a particular point of view.
<b>Deconstruction Analysis:</b> Other side of the story, marginalised, underrepresented or silenced (Boje, 2001). Contradictions, taken for granted assumptions, subject positions, and multiple positioning (Monk <i>et al.</i> , 1997).
<b>Dominant Plot:</b> identify the dominant plot or script (Boje, 2001). This contains within it taken for granted discourse, reconstituted and past texts (Monk <i>et al.</i> , 1997).
<b>What is not said in the narrative</b> – expose and explore what is not said, identify marginalised narratives and explore what is not said and why (Monk <i>et al.</i> , 1997).
<b>Find the exception/contradiction</b> – contradictions to the dominant plot (relational or experiential values).

## Appendix H continued: Units of data analysis

TABLE 5

Force of Utterance & Modality
<b>(Metaphor) Target Domain:</b> the topic or concept that we want to describe through the metaphor.
<b>(Metaphor) Source Domain:</b> the concept that we draw upon in order to create the metaphor.
<b>Rhetorical tropes: hyperbole</b> – exaggeration (e.g.) I felt ten feet tall.
<b>Rhetorical tropes:</b> personification/objectification – human qualities or abilities assigned to abstractions/objects – ‘democracy’ will not stand by, the ‘credit crunch’.
<b>Pre-supposition:</b> is a skilful way in which authors/speakers are able to imply meaning without overtly stating them or present things as taken for granted and stable when in fact they may be contestable and ideological.